

Hafa Adai!

Remaining Summer P-EBT vouchers issued next week. **PAGE 2**

Joint resolution OKs Torres' request for \$500 retiree bonuses. **PAGE 3**

\$1

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Bellas to handle Torres suit

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The NMI Supreme Court has appointed former Superior Court associate judge Timothy Bellas to hear the lawsuit filed by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres against the House of Representatives Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee over its decision to hold him in contempt.



Bellas

Court Chief Justice Alexandro Castro issued an order appointing Bellas to serve in the matter *pro tempore*, or for the time being.

"Timothy H. Bellas, former associate judge of the Commonwealth Superior Court, is hereby designated and appointed to serve in the matter *pro tempore*, or for the time being."

See BELLAS on Page 4

995 recovered cases; 99 new cases; 14 hospitalized

» How to have a safe holiday season during the COVID-19 pandemic

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. announced yesterday that 99 new cases of COVID-19 were confirmed from surveillance and travel testing on Dec. 14, bringing the CNMI's total to 2,117.

The new cases—two from travel testing and 97 from surveillance testing—have since been isolated and being actively monitored, said CHCC.

As of Dec. 14, CHCC said
See 995 on Page 4

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

8 DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

AT A GLANCE

As of 5:32pm, Dec. 16, 2021

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population Fully Vaccinated: **90.5%**

Days since last community transmission **1**

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	35,885
Fully Vaccinated:	33,085
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,254
Fully Vaccinated:	4,814
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,117

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	19,348	9	19,357
Recovered	18,809	69	18,878
Active	200	9	209
Deaths	269	1	270

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	2,018	99	2,117
Traced via Travel Screening	274	2	276
Traced via Community Screening	1,744	97	1,841
Deaths	6	0	6

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., <https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/>

Buying locally from small businesses helps to support local jobs

TOGETHER, WE CAN

By JOE GUERRERO
Special to the Saipan Tribune



I am grateful that our small business, the Naked Fish Bar and Grill, has grown successfully in the past 17 years. However, when the pandemic struck in March 2020, our business suffered the most when safety protocols were put in place to help mitigate COVID-19. As COVID-19 cases continue to rise, small businesses also continue to suffer.

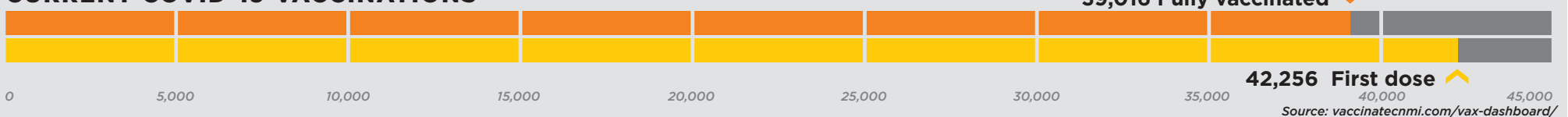
Story on Page 11



TOY STORY

NORTHERN MARIANAS TECHNICAL INSTITUTE Volunteers paint and work on Christmas decorations at the Northern Marianas Technical Institute's main facility in Lower Base. NMTI has partnered up with the Northern Marianas College and the Criminal Justice Planning Agency to create, paint, and set up Christmas decorations. The theme of the decorations was "A Toy Story Christmas" inspired by Pixar's Toy Story movies. The decorations can be found in front of the CJPJ office on Capital Hill.

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



INSIDE



NATION

The new omicron coronavirus mutant speeding around the world may bring another wave of chaos.

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ASIA

Tens of thousands of Filipinos were being evacuated as a powerful typhoon approached.

PAGE 16



WORLD

Nelly Joseph is unsure of where she would sleep after blasts from a gas tanker destroyed her house.

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GOT A NEWS TIP?

TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com



Precinct 5
Holiday Art
Bazaar

When: December 18, 2021
9 A.M.-3 P.M.

Where: Kagman Community Center

"Buy locally made gifts for Christmas!"

Local

Remaining Summer P-EBT vouchers issued next week

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With 5,951 households in the CNMI already given their Summer Pandemic-Electronic Benefits Transfer coupons, or Summer P-EBT, as of yesterday, the Nutrition Assistance Program of the Department of Community & Cultural Affairs will be issuing this benefit to the remaining 552 households on Saipan on Dec. 21 and 22.

NAP administrator Walter Macaranas said yesterday that the distribution for

the remaining households will be via drive-thru at the NAP Office in As Lito from 8am to 5pm.

Macaranas said this includes approved applications to households that submitted applications during the open period from Oct. 18 to Nov. 30, 2021.

P-EBT is a federal program that provides food stamp benefits to school-aged children who lost access to school meals because their school was closed or operating with reduced in-person attendance due to COVID-19

in school year 2020-21.

Summer P-EBT is an extension of P-EBT for school year 2020-21. Each eligible child will receive \$438 in the form of NAP coupons. NAP started the distribution of Summer P-EBT benefits on Saipan last month.

Macaranas said NAP has processed Summer P-EBT benefits for 6,503 households consisting of 12,685 children in the CNMI.

He said that households that won't be able to pick up their benefits during Dec. 21 and 22 drive-thru may pick up their benefits via walk-in at the NAP Benefit Issuance Office in As Lito. He said the summer benefits will be available for pick up through March 31, 2022.

He said application numbers that have been approved and whose summer benefits are available for pickup are posted in the NAP website: <http://cnminap.gov.mp>.

P-EBT provided the Marianas an estimated \$11.1 million. The Summer P-EBT is estimated at \$5.5 million.

NAP and the Public School System's Child Nutrition Program are partnering to administer the P-EBT and Summer P-EBT.



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Joint resolution OKs Torres' request for \$500 retiree bonuses

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
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REPORTER

The Senate unanimously adopted Wednesday a joint resolution approving Gov. Ralph DLG Torres' request to the Legislature to create a new program and business unit that would pave the way for the release of \$500 bonuses to CNMI government retirees.

Nine senators approved Torres' request to reprogram \$1.3 million from the general fund for the payment of the retirees' bonuses.

Senate President Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), author of the Senate Joint Resolution 22-05, said they agreed with the importance of expeditiously entertaining Torres' request in support of the retirees.

"The timing of these funds could not be more fitting to spread joy as we prepare for the upcoming holiday season," said Hofschneider, adding that it has been four years since the last bonus was distributed to retirees.

He said the Senate continues to support the retirees and their contributions to the CNMI government and its people.

Hofschneider said after the Senate's approval of the joint resolution, he reached out to House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) for their expeditious action on the resolution.



Hofschneider

Senate Joint Resolution 22-05 will be transmitted to the House for action at their scheduled session on Dec. 20, 2021.

Sen. Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota) requested the House to expeditiously adopt the same joint resolution so the retirees can avail of these bonuses in time for the holidays.

Before the voting, Sen. Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) said it's always nice to address issues that concern retirees.

"I know that they have served their time in the workforce and obviously, everybody wants to see that time in their life where they would generate a certain type of income and annuity," DeLeon Guerrero said.

The senator said she believes that government employees are just as deserving of a bonus if

they are to reprogram funds from the general funds.

"I believe, personally, that they also deserve to be given a bonus because they are also working within the public sector," she said.

DeLeon Guerrero said the government employees existing today deserve also to be given a bonus because they are serving the community.

In his letter Tuesday to the Legislature, Torres said the purpose of the joint resolution is to address technicalities that delayed the disbursement of the retiree bonus payments that were initially scheduled for Dec. 15, 2021.

Torres said legislative support for a joint resolution will allow the Department of Finance to reprogram the \$1.3 million needed for the bonus payments to retirees.



Torres

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Water service interruption in Papago, San Vicente, Laolao, Tuteuram, Upper Dandan

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be an emergency water service interruption today, Dec. 17, 2021, from 12pm to 4pm for customers in Papago, San Vicente, Laolao, Tuteuram and Upper Dandan.

The emergency scheduled water service interruptions is to allow CUC's contractor for the San Vicente Water Tank Replacement Project to install a bypass system for the pressure sustaining valve assembly prior to disinfecting the newly constructed San Vicente Tank. Water service to the affected areas will resume

today, Dec. 17, at 4pm.

This forms part of the series of water interruptions in these areas that started on Dec. 14, 2021.

This project is part of the San Vicente Water Tank Replacement Project to provide a more reliable water system to the people of the CNMI. It is funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page. (PR)

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Hunter files complaint against Propst over alleged physical threats

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie.delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Robert H. Hunter, who is the senior policy advisor at the Office of the Governor, has filed a complaint before House of Representatives Speaker Edmund S. Villagomez (Ind-Saipan) against Rep. Edwin K. Propst (D-Saipan) over the latter's remarks that circulated yesterday on social media where he allegedly made physical threats and used inappropriate language on Hunter and other people.

In his letter to Villagomez dated Dec. 15, 2021, Hunter said not only

were these expletive-filled threats of violence, but the "highly aggressive and unhinged demeanor" of Propst in the delivery of the threats was in and of itself very concerning.

"They were hate-filled and frankly the product of someone who is not of sound mind or sensibility," said Hunter in the complaint that includes partial transcript of Propst's videos.

Hunter asked Villagomez to investigate the matter and that the lawmaker be duly reprimanded as severely as al-



Hunter

lowable for his "reprehensible and unacceptable behavior."

"Our great Commonwealth cannot retain representatives who physically threaten members of the public," Hunter said.

When sought for comments last night, Propst described Hunter as a "cyber bully."

"He trolls and attacks and says the most slanderous things and then cries because he feels threatened. He needs to put on his big boy pants. If he dishes it out, he needs to man up and take it.

What a joker," said Propst.

Hunter said he has never communicated directly with Propst in the previous year (or longer) and that at no time has he ever threatened physical violence against him, nor threatened anyone in Propst's family, nor harmed or threatened to harm the lawmaker's property the same way that Propst has allegedly threatened him.

Hunter said these threats also lend insight into the Propst's mindset. "I believe that anyone in such a position, who cannot control themselves enough to restrain themselves from such deplorable behavior and physically threatening members of the public in open social media forum presents a real danger, not only to me and my family, but to the others he has publicly threatened and the general public," Hunter said.

He said the video, which has been making its rounds on social media platforms like Facebook and messaging platforms like WhatsApp, contains straightforward threats of physical violence by Propst against him and other members of the public. In the video, Propst also used expletives against a certain Roger Sakisat.



Propst

Hunter said Propst uses disgusting and inappropriate language in the video, invites a physical interaction, and describes how he will physically harm him and others. He said this is absolutely unacceptable behavior from a member of the Legislature and the threatening of the physical well-being of particular members, beyond being absolutely unbecoming of a legislator, may be a violation of law.

Hunter said Propst holds a high position of public trust, influence over CNMI laws, and thus, power.

Today, Friday, the House's newly formed Special Standing Committee on Official Conduct and Ethics that will look into an ethics complaint against Propst will swear in its members.

It was Grace "Pitu" Sablan Vaiagae, who is a counselor and an advocate for the rights of abused women, who filed the ethics complaint against Propst last Nov. 9 over allegations that he had sex with several underage women approximately 20 years ago when he was still a teacher at Marianas High School and an employee at the Northern Marianas College.

Propst has denied the allegations. He earlier also stated that Villagomez had spoken to him about the formation of the Ethics Committee and that he welcomes it.

KFC is latest ProaPerks partner

Kentucky Fried Chicken is the latest company to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive nachos or a free cookie with every purchase of a two-piece chicken meal from KFC.

Kentucky Fried Chicken joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners, such as 153 Restaurant, 360 Restaurant, 4EVER CNMI, Alamo Car Rental, AllStar Sporting Goods, Aqua Connections, Inc., Athlete's Foot, Avis Rent A Car, BAB Korean Restaurant Cup Bab, Chagi Norf Kitchen, Boarderline, Bolis R US 2, Candle J, Caravan of Food, Casa Decor, Casa Urashima, Chelu Alynez Enterprise, Chungi Wa Korean Restaurant, Clear Water Place, Clear Water Residence, Clear Water Villa, Coral Garden Hotel, Cosmos Lounge, D' Chef's Kitchen, Docomo Pacific, Dollar Days, Enterprise Car Rental, Ete Cafe, Fishing Tackle and Sporting Goods, Fork and Spoon, Garapan Restaurant Cafe & Grill, Gold's Gym, Grandvrio Resort Saipan, Great Harvest, Boyer Trading Company LLC, dba Ginen Saipan, Ha'ani Company, Healing Stones Spa, Highway Ex-



Kentucky Fried Chicken is now a proud NMC ProaPerks partner. More information about their special promotion for w card holders can be found at marianas.edu/proaperks.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Services, Shirley's Cafe, Salty's, Stay Cafe, Stay Cafe, Summer Snow Cafe & Kids Corner cafe, Summit Auto Repair Shop, Surf Club, Residence Lodge, The Ohala Foundation Clothing, The Pacific Supply, The Shack, Time Creation Corp., Tinian Diamond Hotel, Tom Yum Restaurant, Tribe Marianas, and Triple J Motors.

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include Northern Marianas College alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. (NMC)

995

From Page 1

there have been 995 recovered cases, 828 active cases, and three COVID-19-related deaths since Oct. 28. As of Dec. 15, there are 14 active hospitalizations. By vaccination status of the 14, nine are unvaccinated and five are vaccinated. One of the 14 is on a ventilator.

Of the 99 new cases, 64 were found through contact tracing and 35 through community-based testing. The vaccination statuses of all cases were pending verification as of yesterday afternoon, said CHCC.

For testing efforts, CHCC said that 566 COVID-19 tests were conducted on Dec. 14 comprising travel and surveillance testing. CHCC noted, however, that this number does not include numbers on the COVID-19 antigen testing conducted by the Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services at select fire stations. In the CNMI, regis-

tering for testing can be done at <https://covidtesting.chcc.health>.

In Guam, one more person was died from COVID-19-related causes, according to the latest release from the territory's Joint Information Center.

Guam's 270th COVID-19-related fatality occurred at the Guam Memorial Hospital on Nov. 3, 2021. The patient was a 76-year-old female, unvaccinated. She tested positive on Sept. 25, 2021.

"Jeff, Josh, and I hold her family and friends in our hearts as we pray for their solace," said Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero. "While we prepare for the Christmas holiday, we must continue to keep those we've lost in our thoughts. Be there for one another, to console each other, safely."

Safe holiday season

In order to ensure a safe holiday season even as the CNMI continues to see an increasing number of positive cases, CHCC chief executive officer Esther L. Muña advises the commu-

nity to get vaccinated and practice the 3 W's: wash your hands, watch your distance, and wear a face covering.

"We really want to again [emphasize that] if you're not vaccinated, full-vaccination is [one] key to having a safe holiday. ... We want [you] to spend time with your family, and the best way to do that right now is [avoiding] the spread. ... We want everyone to protect each other," said Muña last week.

She pointed out that caring about one another is an important value in the CNMI's traditions and culture. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, caring for one another in these times is done through practicing public health mitigation measures, she added.

"That's always been our tradition, our culture. Let's do it. Let's help each other. ... Being fully vaccinated and practicing the 3 W's [is] the way to protect each other, so let's do it all together, and I can believe we can all have safe family [gatherings] and enjoy the holidays without putting someone at risk," she added.

BELLAS

From Page 1

pointed to serve as judge *pro tempore* in this matter," Castro said in his order.

He also ordered that if any of the parties oppose the appointment, they must notify the Clerk of the Superior Court in writing no later than 10 days from the date of the order of any good cause or reason why Bellas should not serve the role.

"Unless good cause be shown otherwise, Judge *Pro Tempore* Timothy H. Bellas shall have full authority to serve in this matter and shall carry out the duties and powers inherent with the appointment," Castro stated.

Bellas has served as a justice and judge *pro tem* of both the CNMI Supreme and Superior Court since 2002.

Castro explained in his order that after Presiding Judge Roberto C. Naraja informed the court that the sitting judges in the Superior Court have recused themselves from the matter, under the authority of Article IV, Section 9d) of the NMI Constitution and in furtherance of the prompt and efficient dispatch of court business, the chief justice may designate a judge *pro tempore* as necessary.

In a statement from Patrick Diaz, Clerk of the Superior Court, he explained that court procedure in matters where all sitting judges recuse themselves from a case, the presiding judge would request the high court to appoint a judge for the time being.

"When all the judges recuse from a case, the presiding judge would request from the chief justice for the appointment of judge *pro tempore*. In this case, a request was sent to Chief Justice Castro yesterday and on the same day he appointed former judge Bellas the judge *pro*

tempore," he said.

Last Tuesday, Naraja and associate judges Wesley Bogdan, Kenneth Govendo, Joseph Camacho, and Teresa Kim-Tenorio recused themselves from hearing Torres' lawsuit.

In his order for recusal, Bogdan stated that hearing the case would be a conflict of interest as he served as the former legal counsel to Torres.

According to Govendo, he recused himself and returned the case for reassignment because he talked with Torres over two weeks ago at a birthday party about testifying in front of the JGO committee.

Kim-Tenorio stated that she chose to recuse herself because her spouse is the director of the Legislative Bureau, appointed by the leadership of both Houses, which includes members of the JGO Committee who are defendants in the Torres lawsuit.

Furthermore, the co-defendant in the case, sergeant-at-arms Peter Towai, is employed by the Legislative Bureau, making Kim-Tenorio's spouse the hiring authority.

Naraja and Camacho both cited Commonwealth law 1 CMC § 3308 stating that they must recuse themselves due to a conflict of interest.

According to *Saipan Tribune* archives, Bellas has been president of the CNMI Bar Association and chaired the CNMI Bar Association Disciplinary Committee for more than 10 years.

He was an assistant attorney general, registrar at the Registrar of Corporations, deputy legal counsel for the 4th House of Representatives, and the first chief legal counsel of the Legislative Bureau.

Bellas also worked for the U.S. Department of Justice as a staff attorney for the U.S. Trustee's Office for Guam and the CNMI.

He chaired the Garment Oversight Board from 2003 to 2008.

CUC: 7,360 accounts already have \$500 credit on their accounts

Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig recently provided utility stimulus funding to the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. in the form of a \$500 utility stimulus credit on electric residential customers' accounts in this difficult and challenging time. The purpose of the utility stimulus is to assist every household in the CNMI with

their utility bill.

CUC is always pleased whenever funding is provided to assist our customers pay their utility bills. The stimulus credit was initially uploaded last Friday, Dec. 10, 2021, to over 4,000 residential accounts. Over the weekend and this week, staff continued to review the list and work with

our system programmers to upload the credits onto residential customers' accounts.

As of Dec. 16, about 70% or 8,000 plus accounts have been reviewed. Of the total accounts reviewed, about 90% or 7,360 accounts already have the \$500 stimulus credit on their accounts.

There are over 4,300 accounts pending for review. The last batch is taking a little longer due to many of the account holders have multiple electric accounts under the same name.

The eligibility guidelines

provided from the Department of Finance details that the stimulus can only be availed of by residential accounts and only one time. It cannot be given to multiple meters or locations under the same name.

That doesn't mean that the others can't avail of the credit. Those that reside at residential locations under the landlord or owner's name must provide proof of occupancy, such as a valid lease agreement. The assistance is for the occupant.

For familial agreements where there is no lease agreement (i.e. such as a family liv-

ing in an aunt's house or their parents' second home and likely without rental payments), they can still avail of the credit by submitting an affidavit sworn under penalty of perjury to get the credit applied to the residential account. The assistance is for the occupant.

Stimulus credits can be used for energy consumption, including prepay kWh usage. Customers who have prepay meters will see funds added on to their prepay accounts. It can also be applied to past due balances, deferred

balances or payment plans on their accounts.

The stimulus credits can also pay for other utility charges such as water and wastewater services. It can also be used to pay for security deposit and other utility fees.

Because this benefits our customers, CUC is supporting the program by being the conduit to see that customers' get the stimulus the governor has made available for them. Any customer who has questions can call the CUC Call Center for assistance at 670-664-4282. (PR)

NMTI, NMC, CIPA team up to create Christmas decor



Volunteers paint and work on Christmas decorations at the Northern Marianas Technical Institute's main facility in Lower Base. NMTI

By **JOSHUA SANTOS**
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Technical Institute has partnered up with the Northern Marianas College and the Criminal Justice Planning Agency to create, paint, and set up Christmas decorations. The theme of the decorations was "A Toy Story Christmas" inspired by Pixar's Toy Story movies.

NMTI chief executive officer Jodina Attao told *Saipan Tribune* yesterday that making and painting the decorations was a two-week endeavor and that working together on the project helped all involved get into the holiday spirit and learn some basic carpentry skills.

Attao thanked all who came

out to help and main artist Aaron Tomokane and NMTI's student services and curriculum coordinator Meena Benavente for painting and shading the characters.

"I'd like to thank the 4-H Club youth volunteers who came over to paint, the staff of CIPA, [Northern Marianas College-Cooperative Research Extension and Education Service] and the NMTI staff for helping to [put] all of these things together. We had two weeks to complete this project and, despite the shutdowns of government offices and schools, we still managed to complete it," said Attao.

The decorations can be found in front of the CIPA office on Capital Hill.

Warning: Rip currents until tonight

There is a high risk of rip currents through Friday night.

Based on the information received from the National Weather Service in Guam and compiled at the CNMI Emergency Operations Center State Warning Point, dangerous rip currents are present in east facing reefs of the Marianas through Friday night

Rip currents can sweep even the best swimmers away from shore into deeper water.

The public is advised to swim near a lifeguard. If caught in a rip current, relax and float. Don't swim against the current. If able, swim in a direction following the shoreline. If unable to escape, face the shore and call or wave for help. (PR)

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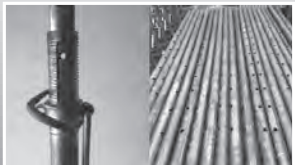
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MVA extends TRIP program to January

By **KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA**
kimberly_bautista@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Marianas Visitors Authority has extended the Travel Investment Resumption Plan, or TRIP, from December to the end of January to sustain the resumption of tourism in the CNMI.

According to MVA deputy managing director Judy Torres in her capacity as acting managing director, MVA extended the TRIP program until Jan. 31 as a result of the success of the program so far.

"With the successful jumpstart of the Marianas tourism economy through

the TRIP program, the outlook for continued gains had been positive for the new year. This includes the anticipated doubling of flights from South Korea to Saipan from three times weekly to six times weekly beginning early January," she said.

In addition, Torres noted that with the extension of the program, Travel Buck incentives will also be reduced.

"Travel Buck incentives are to be reduced in mid-December from up to \$250-\$500/person per island to \$100/person at a flat rate. Travel Bucks, which can only be spent in the Marianas, are still

necessary for the Marianas to remain competitive with competing destinations—like Guam—which are offering similar incentives but to the airlines. We plan to continue to provide PCR tests required for the passenger's return to Korea. I should note that, prior to omicron, airline incentives have not been utilized for any flight in October and November. Also on a positive note, we have been receiving some visitors who have been paying their own hotel accommodations since the hybrid-quarantine requirement under TRIP was lifted last month," she said.

As a result of the rise in the number of COVID-19 cases in the CNMI and the spread of a new variant, omicron, Torres said the MVA board is looking into making changes to the current program to both support recovery and the revival of the tourism industry.

"We are now seeing that the spread of the new omicron variant is causing a concerning number of booking cancellations, so the board will need to revisit TRIP to evaluate what changes may be needed to continue to support the continued revival of tourism and job security for the community," she said.

"Omicron is certainly a critical juncture point. The MVA is closely monitoring the evolving market situation with both our travel trade partners and the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. and the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force and will make continue to make decisions that both prioritize community safety while still working to keep our economy recovery on track," she added.

The Marianas is one of two destinations that have a travel bubble agreement with Korea government through the Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Transportation.

Palacios: Torres' lawsuit wasteful spending of taxpayers' money

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios criticized yesterday Gov. Ralph DLG. Torres' decision to file a lawsuit against the House of Representatives Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee, describing it as "yet another wasteful spending of taxpayers' money and one that only further denies the public their right to know the truth."

Palacios, a Republican who is running for governor in the November 2022 general elections as an independent, said it is "unfortunate and disheartening" that Torres went as far as filing the lawsuit, given that he has repeatedly and publicly stated that he's got nothing to hide.

Torres' lawsuit came about after he announced Tuesday morning that he is not appear-

ing before the JGO Committee that served him with a subpoena to appear and testify. This prompted the JGO Committee, chaired by Rep. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), to hold him in contempt. Tuesday afternoon, Torres and the Office of the Governor, filed a lawsuit against the JGO Committee to quash the subpoena. Torres and the Office of the Governor, through Joseph E. Horey and Gilbert Birnrich respectively, asked the Superior Court to declare that the JGO Committee's subpoena served on the governor is invalid and unlawful since the Executive Branch is a separate and equal branch of government under the Commonwealth Constitution.

In a statement yesterday, Palacios said all this time, energy, and money being spent on fighting the subpoena could be put to better use on getting all the much-needed unem-

ployment insurance, stimulus, and child tax monies into the hands of people in a timely manner and without all the delays that the people are seeing.

Palacios said the allegations of misuse of taxpayers' money are very serious that only Torres himself must put to rest.

"The public deserves an explanation, nothing less. They have the right to know the truth because, after all, it is their money," he said.

Palacios said the inclusion of House sergeant-at-arms in the lawsuit for simply doing his job is "disrespectful,

appalling, and completely uncalled for." He said this is not the way to treat nor show appreciation to any of the CNMI's veterans.

Towai was named co-defendant in the lawsuit as Torres asked the court to enjoin Towai from arresting him.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ETC DONATION

Mount Carmel School thanks JEM Company Ltd. for their recent Education Tax Credit donation of \$400. This donation will be allocated to support academic programs and services and COVID-19 mitigation supplies and resources.



DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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www.dcrm.gov.mp



NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of December 16, 2021

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. Department of Public Lands	10/20/2021 SMS-2001-X-213-A1	Koblerville Homestead Subdivision	Koblerville	Major Siting	Public Hearing 01/06/2022
2. Commonwealth Ports Authority	10/22/2021 TMS-97-X-294-A1	Tinian Airport Parking Lot Expansion	Tinian	Major Siting	Certified Complete 12/13/2021
3. Commonwealth Utilities Corporation	12/2/2021 SW-2022-010	Lower MIHA Sewer Replacement Project	Garapan	Wetland & Mangroves	Under Review*

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

Power outage today in parts of Puerto Rico, Lower Base

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the public that there will be an emergency power service interruption today, Dec. 17, 2021, from 6am to 6:30am in portions of Puerto Rico along Middle Road and the Division of Fish and Wildlife Building in Lower Base.

This will affect the PR-164 water well and the Sadog Tasi wastewater treatment plant and S-1 and S-8 lift stations.

This power outage is intended to allow CUC to perform systems maintenance on the Feeder 1 circuit in Puerto Rico.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Hotline at 236-4333 or monitor our Facebook page. (PR)

Hofschneider signs into law \$1M Rota appropriation bill



Senate president Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian), in his role as acting governor, signs House Local Bill 22-23, S1, into Rota Local Law 22-04 in his office at the Senate yesterday morning. The bill proposes to appropriate to Rota for referral patients, among other programs, Rota's \$1 million share of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's \$15 million license fee that was paid to the CNMI government two years ago.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Senate president Jude U. Hofschneider (R-Tinian) in his capacity as acting governor signed into law yesterday a local bill that the Rota Legislative Delegation passed last week that appropriate to Rota for referral patients, among other programs, Rota's \$1 million share of Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's \$15 million license fee that

was paid to the CNMI government two years ago.

Hofschneider signed in his office House Local Bill 22-23, S1 into Rota Local Law 22-04.

Sen. Teresita A. Santos (Ind-Rota), who is co-chair of the Rota Legislative Delegation, extended her gratitude to Hofschneider for acting expeditiously on the measure. "With this, appropriations under Section 2 of the local law can be executed with reporting requirements and no

reprogramming of the same," Santos said.

The senator earlier stated that with the amended bill, there is not fiscal limitations and no reprogramming of the funding.

The delegation amended the bill to reflect changes in the allocation amounts and address the concern of Attorney General Edward Manibusan about a "problematic" provision in the legislation.

Rep. Donald M. Manglona (Ind-Rota), who is co-chair of the delegation, is the author of the bill.

The amended bill, HLB 22-23, S1, proposes to allot \$217,924 from the \$1 million for interisland medical referral stipend for patients and their escorts under the expenditure authority of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. chief executive officer or his/her designee.

The bill proposes to allot \$290,000 for Medical Subsidence Allowance for the Rota hemodialysis and terminally-ill patients under the expenditure authority of the Finance secretary.

The legislation also pro-

poses to allot \$68,000 to the Rota Liaison Office under the expenditure authority of the Rota mayor;

■ \$45,000 shall be used to purchase a new vehicle.

■ 5,000 shall be used for fuel and lubrication.

■ \$3,000 for office supplies and equipment.

■ \$15,000 for the Rota Health Clinic assessment of hemodialysis facility and to assess for Medicare compliance and eligibility.

The bill proposes to allot \$50,000 to purchase a vehicle for the Department of Public

Safety-Rota Criminal Investigation Division and for the cost of freight under the expenditure authority of the Rota mayor.

The bill proposes to allot \$374,076 for the Rota Delegation's community programs and projects under the joint expenditure authority of the chairpersons of the Delegation or their designee.

Last October, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres notified the Senate and the House of Representatives that \$8 million of the \$15 million six-casino license fee that IPI earlier paid is available for appropriation.

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Coral Reef and Natural Resources Initiative grants for FY 2022 now open to insular areas

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs hereby announces that applications for fiscal year 2022 funding under the Coral Reef and Natural Resources Initiative may now be submitted to Grants.Gov for funding consideration to support the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the freely associated states—the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

"This grant is meant to help improve the health of coral reef ecosystems, to bolster coastal resilience, and to protect other natural resources in the U.S. insular areas for their long-term economic and social benefit," said deputy assistant secretary Keone Nakoa. "Priority will be given to projects that help the insular areas address a variety of threats to coral reef ecosystems and to eradicating invasive

aquatic and terrestrial plants, insects, and animals, while supporting native species."

Coral Reef and Natural Resources Initiative funding is available for projects intended to better protect and manage the coral reefs within the U.S. insular areas.

Insular government entities, educational institutions, and non-profit organizations whose grant proposals directly benefit the four U.S. territories or the three freely associated states are eligible to submit applications.

More information about financial grant assistance may be found on the OIA website along with the specific CRNR 2022 instructions. To apply, visit grants.gov and use CFDA # 15.875. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2022; however, it is highly recommended that applications be submitted as early as possible. Applications will be reviewed beginning May 2022 once OIA receives full-year appropriations. (PR)



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-001

KOBLEVILLE SEWERLINE EXTENSION PROJECT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Koblerville Sewerline Extension Project in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists of the installation of gravity sewer main, new service laterals, connection to existing service laterals, and the installation of sewer manholes.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and CUC. The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

CUC requires the project to be completed in **300 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$200.00 for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid MUST be submitted in a sealed envelope marked “**CUC-IFB-22-001, Koblerville Sewer Line Extension Project**” to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 11, 2022**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Performance Bond of *one hundred percent (100%)* of the total proposal price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC. A Payment Bond of *one hundred percent (100%)* of the total proposal price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands or otherwise secured in a manner satisfactory to CUC, for the protection of all persons supplying labor and material to the contractor or its subcontractors for the performance of the work provided for in the contract.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). **Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. The award of a contract may be contingent upon the Commonwealth Public Utilities Commission's (CPUC) approval. If CPUC approval is required, the contract will not be executed by CUC until such approval is provided. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on December 30, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, Jr., CUC's Procurement & Supply, Purchasing Administrator, via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Larry Manacop, Acting Chief Engineer for Water/Wastewater via email at larry.manacop@cucgov.org, Joel Puyat, Engineer via email at joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior, Administrative Technician via email address at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation



JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 22 – 032

Opening Date: December 15, 2021
Closing Date: December 29, 2021

POSITION TITLE:	Fiscal Technician
DEPARTMENT:	COA/Customer Service/Call Center
LOCATION:	Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA
ANNUAL SALARY:	\$20, 826.00 - \$28, 115.00 per annum, Non-Exempt
CONTRACT:	Not Contracted
POSITION(S):	One (1)

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.

Duties:

- May supervise staff to include: prioritizing and assigning work; conducting performance evaluations; ensuring staff is trained; ensuring that employees follow policies and procedures; maintaining a healthy and safe working environment; and, making hiring, termination, and disciplinary recommendations.
- Receives and processes customer payments; screens and verifies check receipts; updates customer accounts; reviews customer account status for partial payment receipts; computes payment information; and issues payment slips.
- May provide field utility meter inspection, testing, investigation, repairs and service documentation.
- Enters and verifies account changes and correction transactions; researches, reconciles and compiles adjustment documentation; prepares billing adjustments; and/or documents customer account status.
- Balances cash and other payment receipts and prepares bank deposits; balances credit card receipts with merchant settlement records; prepares sales deposits; processes customer refund payments; may process and file payroll documents.
- Receives and responds to customer calls and inquiries; reviews account and payment information; explains customer billing regarding charge disputes; assists customers with new accounts, required documentation and application processing; processes work orders as required; and refers inquiries to appropriate resource.
- Organizes and files revenue receipts, change vouchers, and related reports; maintains filing system; and prepares listings, schedules and activity reports.
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:

Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS and 4 years of utility accounts or fiscal support experience.

Knowledge of: Applicable Federal, Commonwealth and local laws, codes, regulations and/or ordinances; Supervisory principles, practices and techniques (based on assignment); Cash handling practices (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; Applicable equipment used in field utility services (based on assignment); Modern office technology.

Skills in: Interpreting and applying applicable laws, codes, regulations and standards; Supervising, monitoring, training and evaluating staff (based on assignment); Receiving, posting and reconciling payments, cash receipts or account information; Verifying and updating account or utility meter information; Providing customer service and responding to inquiries; Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Inspecting and operating field equipment related to utility usage and testing (based on assignment); Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching, reconciling and preparing account adjustments and related documentation; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Researching account information and providing information regarding billing disputes; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Licensing: Valid CNMI Driver's License with appropriate class.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation



JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 22 – 034

Opening Date: December 9, 2021
Closing Date: December 22, 2021

POSITION TITLE:	Fiscal Assistant
DEPARTMENT:	COA/Customer Service/Call Center
LOCATION:	Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA
ANNUAL SALARY:	\$16, 742.00 - \$22, 602.00 per annum, Non-Exempt
CONTRACT:	Not Contracted
POSITION(S):	One (1)

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Chief of Administration or his/her designee.

Duties:

- Updates and verifies customer account or work order information; enters and balances payment data; prepares timekeeping records; may work in the field obtaining and entering customer utility meter information, and replacing or disconnecting utility meters and services.
- Receives customer payments; balances and records cash and other payment receipts; verifies receipts against payment system data; and prepares deposits.
- Monitors and updates customer account information; researches account discrepancies or unusual meter readings; calculates payment information for past-due accounts, new installations and security deposits; reports research findings; and/or follows up on service or work order status.
- Greets customers or receives calls; responds to customer inquiries such as account balance information, payment due dates, minimum payment amounts due or general information inquiries; refers customers to appropriate resources.
- Copies and scans documents; maintains and organizes files records, reports and accounting transaction documentation.
- Updates and maintains spreadsheet reports; prepares fiscal transaction reports or other work activity reports.

Minimum Requirements:

Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS.

Knowledge of: Cash handling practices (based on assignment); Customer service principles; Basic mathematical principles; Recordkeeping principles; Safety principles and safe work practices; Applicable equipment used in field utility services (based on assignment); Modern office technology.

Skills in: Receiving, posting and reconciling payments, cash receipts or account information; Verifying and updating account or utility meter information; Providing customer service and responding to inquiries; Coordinating services with other departments or resources; Inspecting and operating field equipment related to utility usage (based on assignment); Performing basic mathematical calculations; Researching account information or discrepancies; Preparing and maintaining files, forms, reports and records; Copying and scanning documents; Updating, maintaining and preparing reports and spreadsheet tracking documents; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction.

All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, Monday through Friday 7:30 am – 4:30 pm (Except Legal Holidays). Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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Commonwealth Utilities Corporation



JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

JVA No. 22 – 033

Opening Date: December 9, 2021
Closing Date: December 22, 2021

POSITION TITLE:	Trades Assistant, Operator
DEPARTMENT:	Power Generation Division
LOCATION:	Saipan, Northern Marianas Islands, USA
ANNUAL SALARY:	\$16,742.00 - \$22,602.00 per annum, Non - Exempt
CONTRACT:	Not Contracted
POSITION(S):	One (1)

The incumbent will be under the direct supervision of the Power Generation Manager or his/her designee.

Duties:

- The Trades Assistant-Operator assists with the safe and efficient operation of all plant equipment and machinery including, but not limited to, incinerators, generators, operation of valves, plant production operations, and unloading of diesel fuel tank trucks to storage tanks.
- Follows all safety and operations procedures during operations and maintenance activities;
- Monitoring Plant systems as assigned;
- Prepares job site for work including gathering and setting up materials and supplies, and setting work safety barriers for protection;
- Gathers, cleans and returns equipment, materials and supplies used;
- Cleans and maintains work site after project or repair work is complete;
- Monitors equipment; takes readings and collects data; documents equipment readings; prepares and submits data and work reports;
- Performs inventory spot checks to ensure adequate materials and supplies are available for daily work activities;
- Assisting with equipment inspections, cleaning, corrosion control, and painting;
- Operating incinerators; oil and water separator pump, servicing and preparing oil filters;
- Maintaining grounds, trimming trees and removing debris and housekeeping;
- Performs other duties of a similar nature and level as assigned.

Minimum Requirements:

Education: High School Diploma or GED or ABE Program AS. Training and knowledge in operations repair, and maintenance of power generating and/or industrial equipment/facilities desired but not required.

Knowledge of: Customer service principles; Basic mathematical concepts; Safety procedures and safe work practices; Modern office technology.

Skills in: Operating heavy and light equipment machinery, hand and power tools required of assigned area; Adhering to safety procedures and safe work practices; Prioritizing tasks and managing time for efficiency; Identifying issues and solving problems; Providing attention to detail; Taking equipment readings and recording data; Maintaining activity logs and reports; Utilizing a computer and relevant software applications; Utilizing communication and interpersonal skills as applied to interaction with coworkers, supervisor, the general public, and others to sufficiently exchange or convey information and to receive work direction. Must Able to lift and carry heavy objects of 45 pounds and over, climb ladders, reach above the shoulders, stand, sit, crawl and kneel for prolonged periods and perform repeated bending. Recognize color codes, operate cranes and motor vehicles. Work inside around machinery in operation; in varying degree of temperature in tight or cramped (confined) work spaces, at heights, on ladders or scaffolds, and on slippery or uneven walking surfaces in close proximity to high and low voltage circuits and climbs stairs frequently. Occasionally use solvents, de-greasing agents, or other chemical agents, and be assigned to protracted or irregular hours of work. Work in environments exposed to dust, oil, grease, constant or excessive noise, vibration, and smoke and gas fumes. Work closely with others and/or alone depending on assigned daily activities.

Licensing:

- Valid CNMI Driver's License with appropriate class.

Must be available to work a 24/7 rotation shift to include weekends and holidays, may be on call for emergency response. All applicants may be tested and all applicants are subject to pre-employment drug test.

How to Apply: Submit a completed CUC Employment Application, resume, and applicable supporting documents to the CUC Human Resources office located on the 3rd Floor of the Joeten Dandan Building on Saipan, from Monday to Friday (Except Legal Holidays), 7:30 am – 4:30 pm. Applicants on the island of Tinian and Rota may submit their documents to their respective CUC Administration office. Application, resume and supporting documents can also be e-mailed to: employment.applications@cucgov.org

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MCS Theatre Club releases *Zero2Hero* for free on YouTube

Mount Carmel School's Theatre Club announced yesterday that it is treating everyone to a special Christmas gift with the release of *Zero2Hero* for free on the school's official YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/c/MountCarmelSchool. The movie will premiere on Christmas Eve, Friday, Dec. 24, at 6pm.

A sequel to *Zero2Hero*,

which was released 10 years ago, *Zero2Hero* continues a club tradition of having students direct shows, with this movie being directed by MCS senior Jedric Villar.

Villar is no stranger to performing, having been a crew member on several Theatre Club productions and being an active member of the school's music program. Directing *Zero2Hero*,

however, has been his biggest role, which he says "has been amazing!" As he puts it, "Directing the sequel wasn't only fun, but it's also been inspiring to see both cast and crew so enthusiastic."

Zero2Hero stars Jill Mallari and Aleia Santos as Re'ha and Roze, two school rivals who are mentored by their older cousins, Richard and Zero,

played by the two stars of the first film, Kevin Bautista and Victor Cabrera. The movie is directed by Villar and was written by school president and the director of the first movie, Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero, along with Theatre Club AlumKnight Justin Ocampo.

Zero2Hero is part of the Theatre Club's ongoing celebration of its 25th anniversary. Launched in 1996, the MCS Theatre Club celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, commemorating over 50 theatrical and cinematic productions, including several Disney musicals, numerous Shakespeare plays, and a number of original productions. The club started this year's celebration in February with the sold-out premiere of the latest entry in its award-win-

ning *We Drank Our Tears* series, the stories of Visitacion, Henry, and Dave at American Memorial Park. Those films were followed up by April's sold-out performances of the club's adaptation of William Shakespeare's classic comedy, *As You Like It*. Next year, the club will conclude the celebration with the classic musical, *The Sound of Music*.

Zero2Hero was made possible by the generous support of Frances Sablan Arriola, Great Harvest Bread Co., KKMP,

Northern Marianas College, the Northern Marianas Sports Association, Saipan Iceland Amusement Arcade, San Vicente Elementary School, and Triple J Enterprises.

Funding for this production is provided by the CNMI CARES Relief Fund for Organizations and supported by the National Endowment for the Arts through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act of 2020. For more information, visit www.mountcarmelsaipan.com. (PR)



The Shack is a proud partner of Mount Carmel School's 2021 Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. Purchase a coupon booklet and participants can receive 49 coupons for \$50. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Great Harvest, Inas' Kitchen, The Shack partner with MCS in coupon fundraiser

In an effort to raise much-needed funds and spread the Christmas spirit, Great Harvest, Inas' Kitchen, and The Shack are offering special discounts for Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser.

By purchasing a holiday coupon booklet, participants can gain a "buy one get one 50% off" coupon from Inas' Kitchen. Great Harvest is offering over three dollars off their sandwich combo. The Shack is offering four coupons: a free Tea of the Day with a purchase of the Plate of the Day, 50% percent off one Chili Bowl, two dollars off any crepe, and a buy one Coconut Milk Oatmeal Bowl, get one free coupon.

The purpose of the fundraiser is to provide the community with a complete booklet of holiday coupons from local establishments. As the COVID-19 pandemic has affected many families and the CNMI economy, this fundraiser also aims to provide families with discounts for this holiday season while also drawing customers to local businesses.

Funds raised by this program will be directly invested in Mount Carmel School's academic programs and services, COVID-19 mitigation resources, and infrastructural improvements.

Only 200 booklets are available for purchase and can be bought at the MCS Business Office from Monday to Friday between 7am and 4pm.

The \$50 holiday coupon booklet contains a total of 49



Inas' Kitchen is a proud partner of Mount Carmel School's 2021 Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. Purchase a coupon booklet and participants can receive 49 coupons for \$50. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Great Harvest is a proud partner of Mount Carmel School's 2021 Holiday Coupon Fundraiser. Purchase a coupon booklet and participants can receive 49 coupons for \$50. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

coupons with discounts from partners like All Star, Blackwood, Borderline, Couples Cakery, Cup Bap, Fishing Tackle, Girl Talk, Gold's Gym, Great Harvest, Herman's Modern Bakery, Hot Deals Saipan, Inas' Kitchen, Kiki's, Latte Cafe, Naked Fish, Natural Nail Spa, Panda House, Poki Yaki, 670 Rock Steady, Saipan Ice Island Cafe,

Spicy Thai Restaurant, Surf Club, TBar, The Shack, Tribe Marianas, and Tyler's Gelatte Stone. Participants of the fundraiser can save over \$200 this holiday season through the provided discounts alone.

For more information about Mount Carmel School's Holiday Coupon Fundraiser, visit www.mountcarmelsaipan.com. (PR)



Commonwealth Judiciary Administrative Office

Guma' Hustisia / Iimwal Aweewe / House of Justice
P.O. Box 502165 • Saipan, MP 96950
Telephone (670) 236-9700/9800 • Facsimile: (670) 236-9702 | Website: www.NMIjudiciary.com

VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcement No. 22-008

POSITION TITLE:
Department:
Annual Salary Range:
Location:
Opening Date: 12/17/2021

Mental Health Court Docket Manager

Superior Court
\$55,000 - \$57,750
Saipan
Closing Date: Until Filled

Announcement No. 22-018

POSITION TITLE:
Department:
Annual Salary Range:
Location:
Opening Date: 12/17/2021

Clinical Liaison – Mental Health Court

Superior Court
\$40,000 - \$50,000
Saipan
Closing Date: Until Filled

Candidate must provide current police and traffic clearances and proof of eligibility to work in the CNMI. Must have a valid drivers' license and operate a court vehicle. Applicants given a conditional offer of employment with the CNMI Judiciary will be required to submit to urinalysis to screen for the illegal use of drugs prior to employment. "Illegal drug" means a substance whose use or possession is controlled by federal law but that is not being used or possessed under the supervision of a licensed health care professional. (Controlled substances are listed in Schedules I-V of 21 C.F.R. Part 1308.)

Education completed in foreign colleges or universities may be used to meet the job qualification requirements if the applicant can show that foreign education is comparable to education received in accredited educational institutions in the United States.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide such evidence when applying for Judiciary jobs. Education received in foreign colleges or universities will be considered if the candidate submits an evaluation of the coursework from: (a) an accredited U.S. college or university; or (b) a private professional organization specializing in interpretation of foreign educational credentials.¹

INTERESTED PERSONS PERSONS Application forms are available at the Judiciary Administrative Office at the Guma Hustisia/Iimwal Aweewe/House of Justice in Susupe, or at the Superior Court offices on Kotten Tinian and Centron Hustisia in Rota during normal business hours except on weekends and holidays. Completed applications, cover letter, and three references should be submitted to:

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Human Resources
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Cell. (670) 783-8592
Fax. (670) 236-9702
hr.judiciary@NMJudiciary.com

This job announcement will remain open until filled and can be seen and a printable copy of the application downloaded at <http://www.nmjudiciary.com>

The Judiciary reserves the right to rescind or cancel this JVA at any time without notice.

THE CNMI JUDICIARY IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER.

¹The following organizations evaluate foreign educational credentials for employment and other purposes. All operate on a fee based on the extent of the education to be evaluated; applicants shall bear the cost of evaluation.
(a) Credentials Evaluation Service P.O. Box 24679 Los Angeles, CA 90024
(b) Education Equivalency Evaluation World Education Services P.O. Box 745 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10011
(c) Education Credential Evaluators, Inc. P.O. Box 17499 Milwaukee, WI 53217
(d) International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. 914 Pickett Lane Newark, DE 19711
(e) Foundation for International Services, Inc. P.O. Box 230278 Portland, OR 97223.
While the Judiciary offer these addresses as information to applicants who request assistance in obtaining an evaluation of foreign education, these services are not preferred over others which may exist.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Require vaccination for US air travel

The United States is closing in on a heartbreaking COVID-19 milestone. Nearly 800,000 American lives have been lost in the pandemic.

With the delta variant still wreaking havoc here and the sobering unknowns of the highly infectious omicron variant, forward-thinking action is vital to prevent more hospitalizations and death. A logical, lifesaving step: requiring COVID-19 vaccination for domestic air travel in the United States.

Doing so wouldn't just make the airline cabin safer for passengers. It also would help protect the people and destinations that travelers are visiting.

In addition, it would spur the unvaccinated to finally take this conscientious step. In a 2021 Kaiser Family Foundation survey, 40% of respondents reluctant to get the shots said they would be more likely to do so if airlines required vaccination or doing so would further ease travel. Currently, just 61% of Americans of all ages are considered fully vaccinated, according to the New York Times COVID tracker.

A measure that provides a powerful incentive for vaccine holdouts to act is clearly necessary. A domestic air travel vaccination requirement for all eligible to get the shots neatly fits the bill. With holiday travel approaching, it would likely move the needle quickly on U.S. immunization levels. That would be beneficial with omicron's troubling approach.

Canada already has put this sensible requirement in place, suggesting that it can be done with minimal disruption for airports and airlines. As of Oct. 30, vaccination became mandatory to board most flights and trains north of the border. Canada sensibly put in a monthlong transition period to ease the adjustment to the new requirement. A similar transition period would be needed in the U.S., especially if a mandate would be put in place before the holidays. But hopefully, U.S. travelers would be motivated to get started on the Pfizer or Moderna series in order to board a plane or get the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, which is still a single immunization.

In a recent interview with an editorial writer, Minnesota infectious disease expert Mike Osterholm said he supports a vaccine mandate for domestic air travel.

But a query to the White House yielded a frustrating response. Asked why the Biden administration hadn't followed Canada's lead, a spokesman simply pointed to a Dec. 2 statement by White House press secretary Jen Psaki. She said at that time that "nothing is off the table," including domestic air travel vaccine requirements.

OK. But with omicron's swift global spread, why is the administration waiting to implement this necessary safeguard?

The current U.S. policy requires those traveling here from another country to be fully vaccinated if they are a "non-U.S. citizen who is a nonimmigrant (not a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, lawful permanent resident, or traveling

See REQUIRE on Next Page



We are the ones failing our teens, not social media

It's no secret that social media is taking a toll on teenagers, especially girls. Filters and photo editing create the facade of a seemingly perfect life and put an emphasis on unrealistic beauty standards and constant comparison. This often leads to decreased self-esteem and to body image concerns.

Having the ability to post, comment and share anonymously gives rise to bullying and rumors spreading at the touch of a button. A study done by Pew Research Center found that 59% of U.S. teens have been bullied or harassed online. Even more stark is the association between social media and poor mental health among adolescents. A 2016 University of Glasgow study found that greater social media use was linked with worse sleep quality and higher levels of anxiety and depression. While there is not enough research at this time to definitively state causation, there is a clear relationship between the rise of social media and the rising rates of anxiety and depression among teens.

In the United States, parents, teachers and even legislators work hard to censor the content that adolescents consume. For example, Utah and Arizona have introduced legislation blocking access to online pornography. This year, states all over the country have limited how race can be taught in schools. Now, many are pushing for Congress to update the 1998 Children's Online Privacy Protection Act to increase the age children are legally allowed to give away their data to 16 years old from 13. But access isn't the issue here, and restriction won't solve anything.

Social media can do a lot of good. Social media allow teens to broaden their social networks, which can be especially beneficial for teens living in remote areas, those who identify with a minority group or those with a disability. This connection can be extremely positive and even empowering. Social media allow for exposure to new ideas, creativity and self-expression. They can simply be places to have fun or even spaces to find support and reach out for help. Not only teens, but everyone, can be exposed to positive role models, scientists, activists and educators all over the world via social media.

Yes, social media giants like Facebook (now Meta) can and should alter their apps to better protect their users. Instagram, for instance, can crack down on hate speech, and stop the shadow-banning—the secret censorship of a person, topic or community that is deemed “inappropriate”—of LGBTQ+ individuals and people of color for posting educational content while blatantly racist posts are not. Snapchat can stop promoting filters that dis-

By **EMMA MCCARTHY**

Chicago Tribune

Emma McCarthy is a health communications writer and the creator of Public Health 4 All.



tort people's faces and bodies. TikTok can monitor and remove comments that harass and bully users.

These changes and others would make social media safer spaces for everyone. The responsibility to restrict access, however, doesn't fall solely on the companies, nor the government. The consumers of this content play a role in perpetuating the negative side of social media by fueling the algorithms and updates. So what happens then?

Adults are continually looking for ways to shield youths from issues that are an inevitable part of growing up in the 21st century. It's not to say that all teens should be given free access to the internet all day, every day. We all know adolescents can be impulsive and irrational, but they are also smarter and more capable than we give them credit for.

It's during this time that teens get to explore who they are, mistakes and all. It is in adolescence that they begin to have abstract thoughts, challenge the status quo, define their sense of self and create a sense of innovation. Adolescence is when we as human beings get to flourish, and social media have the power to magnify that important growth.

Instead of restricting social media usage or access to pornography, we should be cultivating open conversations about them. Because it is not the internet that is causing harm; it's the lack of education. Teens need to be taught about healthy boundaries when it comes to social media and that responsibility lies with parents, teachers and anyone with a teen in their life.

Let's talk to teens about how social media platforms make them feel; about how what we see on the internet is not always the truth. Let's educate our teens on boundaries and online safety; on healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships. Teens want to be treated like adults, and we can provide them with that little bit of freedom by talking to them, not hiding things from them.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Buying locally from small businesses helps to support local jobs

I am grateful that our small business, the Naked Fish Bar and Grill, has grown successfully in the past 17 years. However, when the pandemic struck in March 2020, our business suffered the most when safety protocols were put in place to help mitigate COVID-19. As COVID-19 cases continue to rise, small businesses also continue to suffer.

With COVID protocols and safety measures in place, we have learned to navigate through this new way of living and have changed our approach to things. Respect, patience, and cooperation go a long way as we adapt to the government's health and safety requirements. We also know that if we work together as a community, we can get through anything.

I would like to thank our customers and the community for their continued support. Your patronage means so much to a small business. We appreciate how your hard-earned dollars have helped us through one of the most challenging periods of our time.

I encourage all of us to continue to purchase locally for the holidays. Vote with your dollar to help local businesses to stay open and keep our people employed. Before going online to



GOVERNOR'S
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ADVISERS

shop at corporate sites, consider buying something similar from a local shop. Let's also consider buying from our village stores, businesses who regularly donate to community fundraisers, local fish stands or artists who make local handcrafts. You'll be helping your friends and neighbors in a big way.

This is one of the many reasons why I fully support the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers' Marianas Village Pride campaign. GCEA underscores the importance of being good neighbors and improving the quality of life at the village level. MVP promotes a closer sense of community that we can all appreciate and get behind.

As we head into the holidays, I welcome fellow businesses to join GCEA's holiday beautification efforts and join the Christmas Decorating Contest. I've already seen many small and corporate businesses put up their Christmas decorations, lighting up the mood for those who pass by. However, if you can't put up lights or trees, spread Christmas cheer and *Hafa Adai* and *Tirow* spirit instead. It'll go a long way for your customers!

We must never lose hope that our community will return to better days. In the meantime, let's look for small ways to help

TOGETHER, WE CAN

By JOE GUERRERO

Special to the Saipan Tribune



Joe Guerrero is the co-owner of Naked Fish Bar & Grill and president of the Saipan Chamber of Commerce. Guerrero also serves as a member of the Fiscal Economic Diversification Committee of the Governor's Council of Economic Advisers. As SCC president, Guerrero believes in building a stronger Marianas where its business community works together to make each island better for all.

out each other. It's been a tough two years, but we can count our blessings. I'm most grateful for my family, friends, and the relationships I have built within our community. Their continuous support has been a true gift this holiday season.

For more information, visit the GCEA at cnmieconomy.com, on Facebook and Instagram (@cnmigov.economy), or contact them at gceacnmi@gmail.com.

America is a safe haven for domestic terrorists. What can we do about it?

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, Americans understandably became obsessed with terrorist threats from abroad, particularly the "safe haven" of Afghanistan that was the launching pad for the attacks.

Today, however, perhaps the greatest threat to our nation comes from within, and we are ill-equipped to fight it.

The U.S. has become a de facto safe haven for domestic terrorists because of essential constitutional protections, dated strategies, and inadequate funding and focus. The U.S. Constitution has, in effect, become a weapon against us. The First and Second amendments must be preserved, of course, but what can be done when our protected rights endanger the republic?

This is not merely a thought exercise, but a continual point of tension in U.S. counterterrorism efforts over the last two decades and well before that. I worked in the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism from 2008 to 2018, a decade in which domestic threats were steadily on the rise. In testimony before the House Homeland Security Committee, FBI Director Christopher A. Wray put into words what I had witnessed. The internal threat posed by anti-government and racially motivated groups, he noted, must become a greater focus of counterintelligence work. Wray's sober testimony is wise but understated. The U.S. must address this threat with greater urgency.

Safe havens are physical spaces, typically not well governed, that allow for extremists to organize, recruit, train, proselyte, spread propaganda and raise capital to plan attacks. Extremists of various ideologies have used U.S. safe havens to collect the tools of murder to kill their enemies. At the same time, their widely disseminated propaganda has spawned acolytes. Instead of tiny windows to operationalize an attack, American white supremacists and other anti-government types have wide-open avenues in the U.S. to create their mayhem.

Recent attacks in the U.S. show how our meek approach to combating domestic terrorism has costs lives and undermined our security. Dylann Roof's slaughter of nine Black worshippers in Charleston, South Carolina, in 2015; Robert Bowers' AR-15 attack in 2018 that killed 11 at a Pittsburgh synagogue; and the insurrectionists' Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol each check the three boxes for what constitutes a terrorist act: targeting noncombatants, violence or threat of violence, and provoking fear among an audience that goes beyond the intended direct target.

Neither Roof, Bowers nor any insurrectionists have been charged with terrorism. Why? While the United States has a definition of domestic terrorism, it is still incredibly difficult to charge individuals with carrying out an act of domestic terrorism. That stems from the fact that there isn't a federal crime of "domestic terrorism." This partially explains why

the overwhelming majority of terrorists who have been successfully prosecuted in the United States have been linked to foreign terrorist organizations.

The reticence to treat domestic and international terrorism equally is inexorably linked to constitutional freedoms and a history of government overreach. The FBI violated U.S. law in the 1960s by spying on the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others. Through an effort dubbed the counterintelligence program, the government treated peaceful civil rights activists as terrorists and trampled their constitutional rights. These painful memories rightfully linger and must give us pause, but they should not inhibit our ability to charge mass shooters like Roof, Bowers or the most dangerous insurrectionists with a terrorism count. We can protect individual rights while crafting a legal framework that allows for more robust efforts to snuff out domestic terrorism.

Those who have exploited the American safe haven have often hidden behind constitutional rights provided by the First and Second amendments. Of course, neither amendment is absolute. The First Amendment does not protect, for instance, the use of social media platforms to plan, foment and fund violence. And though anti-government groups wield absolutist interpretations of the Second Amendment, passing laws that curb access to guns is well within the mandate of federal and state governments. With this in mind, there are some actions the U.S. can take to disrupt America's role as a safe haven.

First, we need to shift resources. This means devoting more FBI funds to understanding and then blunting the domestic threat, but without neglecting the still-virulent threats from abroad. We also should refocus foreign resources and personnel, such as the CIA, to engage with the transnational far-right threat. This would require adjusting our foreign intelligence collection structure so that we can decipher and then undermine this threat. We have already begun this recalibration of counterintelligence efforts, although we need the sort of domestic-international coordination that was notably lacking in the lead-up to the 9/11 attacks.

Then the U.S. needs to update federal laws so that acts of terrorism can be categorized as such. Doing so will provide more pathways for prosecutors to charge suspects and their accomplices for their planned acts of domestic terrorism. Additional domestic terrorism charges could also serve to deter would-be terrorists.

We also need to deal with the social media platforms that enable the fundraising, recruiting and planning of attacks to occur with speed and ease. Social media have become fertile ground for a terrorist ecosystem that knows no borders, as Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen has made quite clear. It has been used to groom future extremists and to launder hatred. The U.S. is a net exporter of white supremacy ex-

By JASON M. BLAZAKIS

Los Angeles Times



Jason M. Blazakis is a professor of practice at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. He was director of the State Department's Counterterrorism Finance and Designations Office in the Bureau of Counterterrorism from 2008 to 2018.

tremism, and America's safe haven allows the fomenting of violence in the U.S. and abroad.

We should consider measures that would remove some of the legal liability protections social media companies have enjoyed. For instance, when Silicon Valley's algorithms recommend disinformation, conspiracy theories, hate or violent content, they should be held to account. If someone has become radicalized online through algorithms that direct them to extremist content, the creator of the content should be sued in civil court and the government should levy fines against the company, just as the U.S. government does when financial institutions allow money launderers to move ill-gotten funds.

This work must begin now rather than after the next domestic terrorism attack when emotions will be raw and government overreach most likely. The U.S. fell into this trap after 9/11, when overaggressive surveillance and torture of prisoners, many of whom were innocent, became tools of counterterrorism. Those policies didn't make America safer. Instead, they created more radicalization and provided bad actors an effective recruitment and propaganda tool.

By developing a stronger framework with oversight and input from privacy and civil liberties experts, alongside counterterrorism experts, we can better fight domestic extremists and ensure that our constitutional freedoms are not eroded.

REQUIRE






From Page 10

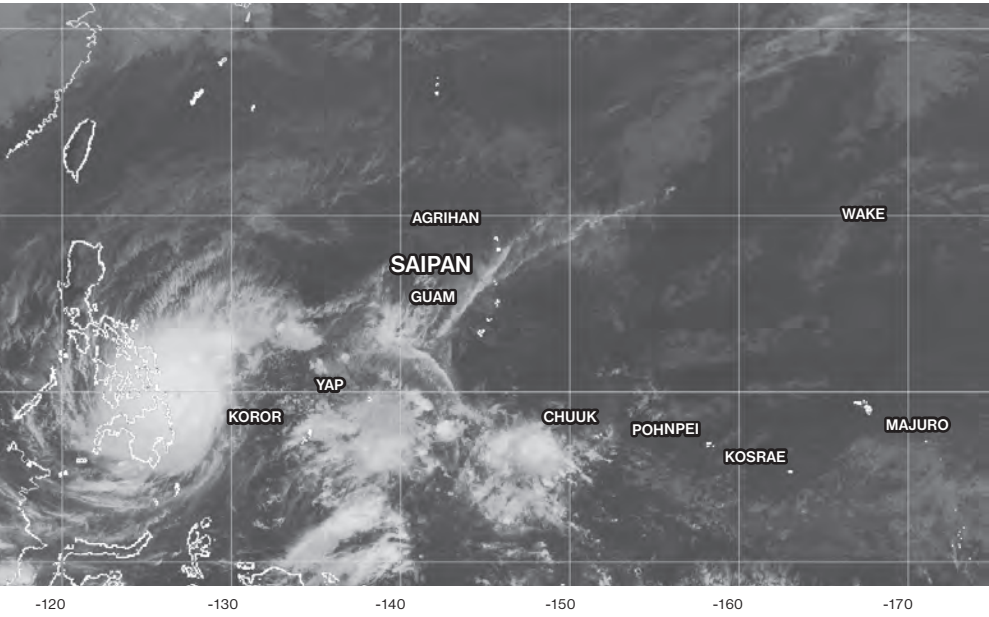
to the United States on an immigrant visa)."

In addition, "all air passengers ages 2 or older, regardless of citizenship or vaccination status, must show a negative result of a COVID-19 viral test or documentation of recovery from COVID-19 before they board a flight to the United States."

Requiring vaccination for all air travelers into and within the United States would help get delta under better control and put a brake on serious omicron infections. The time to act is now.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY	
									
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers. east winds 15 to 20 mph.		Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	
85°	76°	85°	76°	87°	77°	87°	77°	87°	77°
YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE									



PICTURE TIME: 7:20 AM, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2021
Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate to fresh trade winds prevail across the region. Satellite imagery shows partly cloudy skies and radar shows isolated showers moving through the Marianas. Ipan buoy is reporting combined seas around 6 to 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

onds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mp and, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html> and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°	
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 76°	
Yap	Thunderstorms	86° / 77°	
Chuuk	Thunderstorms	87° / 79°	
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	86° / 77°	
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	86° / 77°	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	86° / 80°	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:36 AM	5:49 PM
Saturday	6:36 AM	5:50 PM
Sunday	6:37 AM	5:50 PM
Monday	6:37 AM	5:51 PM
Tuesday	6:38 AM	5:51 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	4:43 AM	4:19 PM
Saturday	-	5:34 AM	5:03 PM
Sunday	-	6:26 AM	5:50 PM
Monday	-	7:18 AM	6:40 PM
Tuesday	-	8:08 AM	7:32 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Mostly Sunny	59° / 48°	
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	90° / 64°	
Hong Kong	Thunderstorms	90° / 82°	
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	88° / 77°	
London	Partly Cloudy	72° / 55°	
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	80° / 65°	
Manila	Thunderstorms	86° / 79°	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	55° / 39°	
Miami	Thunderstorms	87° / 80°	
New York	Mostly Cloudy	86° / 67°	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	93° / 81°	
Paris	Sunny	82° / 57°	
Busan	Thunderstorms	88° / 79°	
Rome	Sunny	90° / 66°	
Salem	Thunderstorms	92° / 73°	
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	65° / 57°	
Seoul	Partly Cloudy	81° / 70°	
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	90° / 77°	
Washington, DC	Thunderstorms	85° / 67°	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
12:45 AM	Low Tide	-0.24	
7:45 AM	High Tide	1.52	
12:51 PM	Low Tide	1.00	
5:49 PM	High Tide	1.61	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6	UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7	UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
				UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6	7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4, 5	OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6	TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA				ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily	3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily	3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily	3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM		3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	
ROTA TO GUAM				GUAM TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
				2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
				2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
				2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
				2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
				2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
				2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
				2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

All OES PGFC winners are 'master readers'

Oleai Elementary School's competitors were the shining stars in the Readers Forum masters category of the recent Primary Grades Forensic Conference.

Being in the masters category means they are in the winners' circle, winning at least one event in the previous competition. Most of the winners of this category are from Oleai Elementary School. All the winners of the kindergarten to 2nd grade division are from OES. In the 3rd grade to 5th grade division, OES competitors won three first place from the four groups of Readers Forum masters category.

Oleai Elementary School launched its annual Read-A-Thon last November to help all students and not only just PGFC participants reach their Projected Scaled Score in Reading while encouraging and rewarding students for reading more books online or hard copy. Like Read-A-thon, PGFC events focus on exciting activities and encourage the appreciation of the joy of reading. The students are encouraged to read even during online classes.

The administration, faculty and staff, and parents of Oleai Elementary School would like to extend their congratulations to the following winners and everyone who participated in the second virtual monthly qualifying competition.

K-2 DIVISION

Reader's Forum Masters

Julienne Rhyme Casuncad, 1st Place

Francisco Tudela, 2nd Place

Dramatic Interpretation

Hallie Marianne Padolina, 5th Place

3-5 DIVISION

Readers Forum Masters A

Leila Leightley, 1st Place

Alexander Joseph Salundaguit, 2nd Place

Eidrian Calibo, 3rd Place

Readers Forum Masters B

Enyan Tang, 3rd Place

Erricka Long, 4th Place

Readers Forum Masters C

Marvic James Javaluyas, 1st Place

Brent Villanueva, 2nd Place

Amlesh David Jr. Jha, 5th Place

Readers Forum Masters D

Zoe Ardieta, 1st Place

Dramatic Interpretation

Brent Villanueva, 2nd Place

Tianmei Jia, 5th Place

Humorous Interpretation

Tianmei Jia, 2nd Place

Duo Interpretation

Zoe Ardieta, 1st Place

Chineinalyn Jones, 1st Place

Choral Speaking

Jovanalyn Mettao, 3rd Place

Jermian Ruben, 3rd Place

Isabel Maximina Carreon, 3rd Place

Erricka Long, 3rd Place

Mario Jr. Sedanza, 3rd Place

Impromptu Speaking A

Alexander Joseph Salundaguit, 5th Place

Impromptu Speaking B

Mario Jr. Sedanza, 1st Place

Hanna Marie Padolina, 2nd Place

CCLHS

Hanna Marie Padolina, 1st Place

Chineinalyn Jones, 2nd Place

Isabel Maximina Carreon, 4th Place

Other Participants

Serena Kailea Waboi

Hanna Gabrielle Ramos

Taizo Kaneshi (PR)



File photo shows the Oleai Elementary School's Primary Grades Forensic Conference participants.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN, MP 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 | FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT SERVICES

FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ARFF RAPID REFILL IMPROVEMENTS AIP 3-69-0002-93/XX

The Commonwealth Ports Authority's (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA hereby seeks the services of qualified consulting firms to provide Construction Management Services for the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport ARFF Rapid Refill Improvements Project, AIP 3-69-0002-93/XX.

The project is being funded by U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Angie Aguiqui at angie.aguiqui@cnmiports.com or Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Wendi L. Prater, CPA Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, local time, Monday, December 20, 2021.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5, 2022**. Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: December 2, 2021

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
P.O. BOX 501055, SAIPAN, MP 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 | FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN SERVICES

FRANCISCO C. ADA/SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT PERIMETER SECURITY FENCE REPLACEMENT PROJECT NO. CPA-SA-002-22 (AIP PENDING)

The Commonwealth Ports Authority's (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design Services for the replacement of the perimeter security fencing at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SA-002-22 (AIP pending).

The project is being funded by U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the proposal package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Angie Aguiqui at angie.aguiqui@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for RFQ statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, local time, Monday, December 20, 2021.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2022**. Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

Date: December 2, 2021



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS LICENSING BOARD

P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: cnmibpl-hcplb.net
Website: cnmibpl-hcplb.net

Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) are hereby giving notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on **Wednesday, December 22, 2021, at 8am** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Administration Building, Governor's Conference Room on Capitol Hill.

AGENDA

- I. Meeting Call to Order
- II. Determination of Quorum
- III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
- IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (11/17/2021)
- V. Public Comments
- VI. Chairperson's Report
 - A. Letter from Board Member Dr. Warren Creed
- VII. Director's Report
 - A. Consumer Complaint – Ms. Christina K. . I
 - B. American Association of State Counseling board (AASCB)
 - C. 2022 Upcoming National Councils Meeting
 - D. Proposed Regulations for Addiction Professional
- VIII. Investigator's Report
- IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
 - A. Governor's Office
 - 1) MEMO: Closure of non-essential government offices for 14 days
 - B. Legislature
- X. Old Business
- XI. New Business
- XII. Pending Applications for Board's Review
 - A. New Application
 - B. Renewal Applications
- XIII. Miscellaneous Business
- XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
 - Peter Geissler – Radiology Technology Applicant (Letter Update)
- XV. Announcements
 - A. Next Meeting Date
 - B. Adjournment of Meeting



COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

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JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT # 06-2021

Opening date: December 17, 2021 Closing date: January 07, 2022

Positions: **SAIPAN:**
(1) Baggage Handling Systems (BHS) Technician
(1) General Maintenance I
(1) Ports Police Officer I

ROTA:
(1) Maintenance/Custodial-I (CPA Rota)
(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance I

TINIAN:
(1) General Maintenance I
(1) AOA Controller/Ground Maintenance

Employment Application must be accompanied with a copy of all required diploma/certificates and/or official sealed transcripts, original copy of recent police record not more than six (6) months old, original copy of U.S. Department of Defense Form DD214 for retired members or veterans of our Armed Forces, and other documents as required for the position. Public Law 11-70 requires that all male applicants age 18 to 25 years old must submit documentation evidencing his registration with the Federal Selective Service System. All applications and required documents must be submitted to the **CPA Administration Office, 2nd Floor Arrival Building, Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport or CPA Administration Office Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport**. Failure to provide any of the required documents will result in automatic disqualification. Certain vacancies may require written and/or physical test. Selected applicants will be subjected to pre-employment drug screening, 10-year Criminal History Record Check and 49 CFR Part 1542.209(d) Requirements. CPA reserves the right to waive or implement other qualifications to meet its needs. The deadline for submission of applications and required documents to the CPA Administration Office (Saipan) or at the Tinian International Airport or Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport is no later than **5:00 P.M. on Friday, January 7, 2022**.

Detailed information on qualifications and position descriptions for the above positions may be picked up along with the application form from Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., except on holidays, at the CPA Administration Office (2nd Floor) of the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport, Arrival Terminal or CPA Admin. Office at the Tinian International Airport or at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport. For additional information, please contact the CPA Human Resources Office by email at lorna.tenorio@cnmiports.com or by phone at (670)237-6500.

CPA is an Equal Opportunity Employer and CPA hires those who are legally entitled to employment in the CNMI.

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director

COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
1 Lower Navy Hill Road Navy Hill, Saipan, MP 96950

PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY

INVITATION TO BID (ITB)
ITB22-CHCC/EHDP/ELC-CDI-007
SUBMISSION DEADLINE: DECEMBER 27, 2021 TIME: 10:00AM (CHST)

"LEASE OF VEHICLES"

INTERESTED PARTIES CAN DOWNLOAD THIS INVITATION TO BID FROM THE CHCC WEBSITE (WWW.CHCC.GOV.MP). ONCE AT THE SITE, NAVIGATE TO **REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS** TAB ON THE LEFT NAVIGATION BAR, CLICK ON THE URL FOR THIS RFP. YOU WILL BE REQUIRED TO ENTER DATA TO ALLOW US TO TRACK ALL REQUESTS FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

THE CHCC RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY AND ALL PROPOSAL AND TO WAIVE ANY IMPERFECTIONS IN ANY PROPOSAL, IF TO DO SO SHALL BE IN THE INTEREST OF THE CHCC. ALL PROPOSALS SHALL BECOME THE EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OF THE COMMONWEALTH HEALTHCARE CORPORATION.

/S/ ESTHER L. MUNA
CHCC CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

/S/ CORA P. ADA
DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT & SUPPLY

Business

Evictions on the rise months after federal moratorium ends

BOSTON (AP)—Soon after losing his trucking job amid the pandemic, Freddie Davis got another blow: His landlord in Miami was almost doubling the rent on his Miami apartment.

Davis girded for what he feared would come next. In September he was evicted—just over a month after a federal eviction moratorium ended. He's now languishing in a hotel, aided by a nonprofit that helps homeless people.

The 51-year-old desperately wants to find a new apartment. But it's proving impossible on his \$1,000-a-month disability check.

"We live in America, and the thing is, people like me, we got to go to the street if we don't have no other place to go because we can't afford rent," said Davis, who lost a leg to diabetes, suffers congestive heart failure and is recovering from multiple wounds on his other leg and foot. "I really can't do nothing."

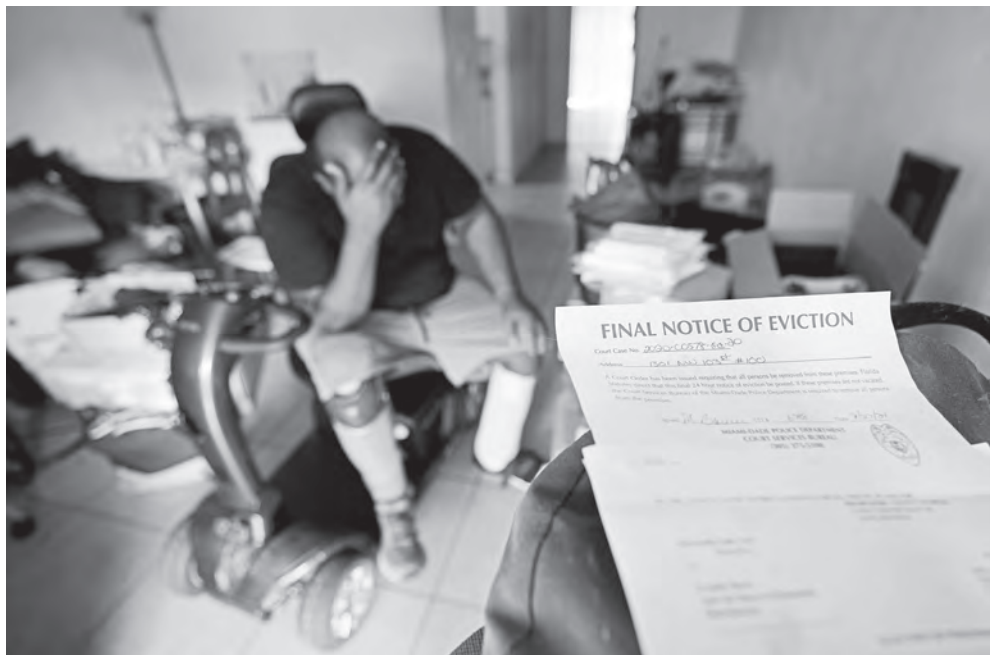
The federal ban, along with

a mix of state and federal moratoriums, is credited with keeping Davis and millions of others in their homes during the pandemic and preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

There was a brief lull in evictions filings after the ban ended. But housing advocates say they're on the rise in many parts of the country—though numbers remain below pre-pandemic levels due to the infusion of federal rental assistance and other pandemic-related assistance like expanded child tax credit payments that are also set to end.

Part of the increase is due to courts catching up on the backlog of eviction cases. But advocates say the upsurge also shows the limits of federal emergency rental assistance in places where distribution remains slow and tenant protections are weak. Rising housing prices in many markets also are playing a role.

According to the latest data from the Eviction Lab at Princeton University, evic-



Freddie Davis, whose landlord raised his rent by 60 percent in the same month he lost his job as a truck driver, waits for a friend to arrive to help him move his remaining belongings to a storage unit, after receiving a final eviction notice at his one-bedroom apartment, Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, in Miami. **AP**

tion filings have been rising in most of the 31 cities and six states where it collects data. They increased 10.4% from the first half of August to the first half of September. In the first half of October, numbers

were 38% above August levels and 25% higher than in September. Filings fell around 7% from the first half of October to November and now remain about 48% below pre-pandemic levels.

Among places where eviction filings are returning to normal are Connecticut as well as Houston, Indianapolis, and Cincinnati and Columbus, Ohio, according to the Eviction Lab. Florida, too,

has seen a significant rise, with filings in Tampa and Gainesville returning to near pre-pandemic levels.

"There was a batch of initial commentary coming out when the moratorium ended and the tone ... was, well, there wasn't a tsunami so we don't have an eviction crisis on our hands," said Ben Martin, senior researcher at Texas Housers, a nonprofit focused on housing issues.

"That initial narrative was somewhat misleading. What we are seeing is a reflection of reality, which is that evictions take time to work their way into and through the court system."

Among the concerns is that some landlords who got federal assistance are still evicting tenants. A survey of nearly 120 attorneys nationwide from the National Housing Law Project found 86% had seen cases like this. They also saw increasing instances of landlords lying in court to evict tenants and illegally locking out tenants.

3 Bank of Guam senior executives to retire

HAGATNA, Guam—Bank of Guam's board of directors and management announced yesterday that Francisco M. Atalig, Joseph P. Bradley, and Ernest P. Villaverde are retiring from Bank of Guam effective Dec. 31, 2021. Atalig also steps down from BankGuam Holding Co. with the same effective date.

Atalig, who is the senior vice president/chief financial officer, has been in the finance and banking professions for 50 years. Joining Bank of Guam nearly 30 years ago after over 20 years with Citibank, Atalig has served in various capacities with Bank of Guam and also with BankGuam Holding Co.

"Frank has provided invaluable counsel and wisdom during his 30 years with the organization. I shall always value his mentoring me initially as a young lending officer, a branch manager, and later as a colleague. With us for more than half the life of Bank of Guam, Frank has served with us through our most challenging of times and also contributed to our key achievements. We are honored to have known Frank as a contributing member of management but most especially as a valued friend," said Joaquin P.L.G. Cook, Bank of Guam president and chief executive officer.

Bradley, who is a senior vice president/chief economist, is an economist by profession and has worked with Bank of Guam in various capacities since 1992. He was previously chief economist for the government of Guam, and served for 10 years on the board of directors of the Pacific Islands Development Bank.

"Simply put, there is no other Joe Bradley [in] Guam and in our region. We and many re-

gion officers, has worked with Bank of Guam primarily in its technological sector since 2003. Previously, Villaverde had served in capacities with the Guam Power Authority and Sprint before joining the bank. Villaverde has overseen the growth and development of Bank of Guam, initiating numerous projects to transition and transform the organization digital's strategy.

"We have seen remarkable progress since 2003 under Ernie Villaverde's leadership. The goal of the organization to plan for and successfully execute our digital strategy has been under the guidance and

counsel of Ernie, and for that and more, we are enormously grateful. Working with Ernie, I have learned much, and even more importantly, learned to question better. I shall miss his professionalism and counsel," said Cook.

"All three senior executives have played significant roles in bringing Bank of Guam to where it is today. They have identified and recruited critical talent, they have shared their wisdom and experience freely, and they have become mentors and valued friends. They have commanded and earned respect from us at the bank, as well as from the community. As pillars in our region, their loss will be felt by us all," he added. **(PR)**



Atalig



Bradley



Villaverde

gional businesses have relied heavily on Joe's analysis, expertise, and his astute regional knowledge to plan our strategies and budgets for nearly 30 years. "JB," as he is known throughout Bank of Guam, has been a source of history and perspective throughout the development of our island and our region, anchoring the Bank of Guam's highly anticipated Economic Forums for over 10 years. Each of us has valued JB's outlook and his directness, and we share the esteem that the community has for Joe. He will be deeply missed by his many friends here at the bank," said Cook.

Villaverde, who is the senior vice president/chief technol-

Airlines face shortage of pilots, other workers, execs say

WASHINGTON (AP)—Airlines are having trouble hiring pilots, flight attendants and other personnel, and that's part of what is causing canceled flights and scrapping of service to some airports, executives told legislators on Wednesday.

American Airlines CEO Doug Parker said a large service outage in October began when high winds shut down three of five runways at Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport, the airline's largest hub.

American, he said, ended up with jets and people in the wrong places, and had a hard time getting workers to pick up extra shifts to handle the problem.

Although workers are doing a great job during the pandemic, they are reluctant to

take extra shifts due to the risk of the novel coronavirus and unruly passengers, he said.

"We need people to want to pick pick up additional shifts," Parker told the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee. Parker said there are enough pilots and staff to run the airline under normal circumstances, but not with surprise weather events.

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said they have to make sure they don't schedule too many flights for the available resources.

He said people who want to be pilots have to spend \$150,000 to get the required training, which typically is not covered by federal student loans.

Kirby, Parker and leaders of Southwest and Delta all

said they're taking steps to train more pilots.

Under questioning, John Laughter, chief operating officer of Delta Air Lines, said Delta has had to end some flights due to a shortage of pilots for regional jets that serve less-populated areas. He sees recovery coming next year.

Southwest CEO Gary Kelly said federal mask requirements for airline passengers "don't add much if anything" because most planes have HEPA air filters and turn over the cabin air.

They spoke during a hearing on airlines getting \$54 billion in aid from taxpayers to keep employees on the payroll during the pandemic. All said the money saved jobs and businesses and made it possible to recover quickly once air travel rebounded.

LA port sees record 2021 imports despite supply chain snags

LOS ANGELES (AP)—The Port of Los Angeles—the nation's busiest—is on track to move a record volume of import cargo this year, even as officials struggle to thin a backup of ship traffic and ease supply chain snarls that have been blamed for product shortages and higher shelf prices.

"The sustained and unmatched demand by the American consumer is pushing our import numbers to new levels," Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, told reporters in an online brief-

ing. "We're on track for an all-time import record in ... 2021."

Cargo containers are moving off the docks faster, Seroka said, but even so nearly 100 ships were drifting near the port or its neighboring sister port in Long Beach, or headed toward them.

Meanwhile, about two months after President Joe Biden announced a deal to establish around-the-clock operations at the Los Angeles port, only one of seven container terminals has met that goal. Part of the problem is estab-

lishing 24-hour operations is coordinating the various stops in the supply chain at overnight hours, including warehouse space and truck transportation.

Seroka said the Los Angeles port expected to import about 5.5 million container units of cargo this year, a 13% jump over the previous record set in 2018. Despite a range of steps intended to speed up the flow of cargo, the November import total was down from 2020, in part because many of the ships that arrived were unscheduled and smaller in size.

Nation

US faces a double coronavirus surge as omicron advances

The new omicron coronavirus mutant speeding around the world may bring another wave of chaos, threatening to further stretch hospital workers already struggling with a surge of delta cases and upend holiday plans for the second year in a row.

The White House on Wednesday insisted there was no need for a lockdown because vaccines are widely available and appear to offer protection against the worst consequences of the virus. But even if omicron proves milder on the whole than delta, it may disarm some of the life-saving tools available and put immune-compromised and elderly people at particular risk as it begins a rapid assault on the United States.

"Our delta surge is ongoing and, in fact, accelerating. And on top of that, we're going to add an omicron surge," said Dr. Jacob Lemieux, who monitors variants for a research collaboration led by Harvard Medical School.

"That's alarming, because our hospitals are already filling up. Staff are fatigued," leaving limited capacity for a potential crush of COVID-19 cases "from an omicron wave superimposed on a delta surge."

Most likely, he and other experts said at a news brief-



Kids and adults wait for their booster or second dose of COVID-19 vaccine at Northwest Community Church in Chicago, Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021.

ing Tuesday, an omicron surge is already under way in the United States, with the latest mutant coronavirus outpacing the nation's ability to track it.

Based on specimens collected last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said omicron accounted

for about 3% of genetically-sequenced coronaviruses nationally. Percentages vary by region, with the highest—13%—in the New York/New Jersey area.

But Harvard experts said these are likely underestimates because omicron is moving so

fast that surveillance attempts can't keep up.

Globally, more than 75 countries have reported confirmed cases of omicron. In the United States, 36 states have detected the variant.

Meanwhile, delta is surging in many places, with hot spots in New England and the upper Midwest. The five states with the highest two-week rolling average of cases per 100,000 people are New Hampshire,

Rhode Island, Michigan, Minnesota and Vermont.

Universities are abruptly closing classrooms during finals week with infections multiplying at a fast rate. Both the NBA and NHL have had to postpone games, and the NFL had its worst two-day outbreak since the start of the pandemic, with dozens of players infected.

Outside the U.S., the president of the European Union said omicron will become the dominant variant in a month and declared that "once again, this Christmas will be overshadowed by the pandemic."

Scientists around the world are racing to understand omicron, which has a large number of worrisome mutations in important regions of its genetic structure that could affect how it spreads from person to person. How quickly the number of cases doubles, known as "doubling time," can give a preview of what the disease burden could be in a few weeks.

CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Wednesday that early data suggests omicron is more transmissible than delta, with a doubling time of about two days.

Chauvin pleads guilty to federal charge in Floyd's death

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin pleaded guilty Wednesday to a federal charge of violating George Floyd's civil rights, admitting for the first time that he kept his knee on Floyd's neck—even after he became unresponsive—resulting in the Black man's death.

Chauvin, who is white, was convicted this spring of state murder



Chauvin

and manslaughter charges in Floyd's May 25, 2020, death, and was sentenced to 22 1/2 years.

In his federal plea Wednesday, Chauvin admitted he willfully deprived Floyd of his right to be free from unreasonable seizure, including unreasonable force by a police officer, by kneeling on Floyd's neck even though he was handcuffed and not resisting. A second federal count in Floyd's death was dismissed, but Chauvin pleaded guilty to another count in an unrelated

2017 case.

Chauvin appeared in person for the change of plea hearing in an orange short-sleeve prison shirt and was led into and out of the court in handcuffs. He said "Guilty, your honor" to confirm his pleas, and acknowledged that he committed the acts alleged.

Chauvin could have faced life in prison on the federal count, one possible incentive for him to avoid trial.

Under the plea agreement, both sides agreed Chauvin should face a sentence ranging from 20 to 25 years, with prosecutors saying they would seek 25. The final sentence will be up to U.S. District Judge Paul Magnuson, but Chauvin is likely to face more time behind bars than he would on the state charges alone.

With good behavior, Chauvin's state sentence would have amounted to 15 years behind bars before he became eligible for parole. A

federal sentence would run at the same time, and good behavior also can reduce time—but inmates typically serve about 85% of their sentences.

That means if Chauvin gets the 25 years prosecutors want, he would likely spend 21 years and three months in prison—or roughly six years longer behind bars than his state sentence alone.

Three other former officers—Thomas Lane, J. Kueng and Tou Thao—were indicted on federal charges alongside Chauvin.

Floyd's arrest and death, which a bystander captured on cellphone video, sparked mass protests nationwide calling for an end to racial inequality and police mistreatment of Black people.

Chauvin also pleaded guilty to violating the rights of a 14-year-old boy during a 2017 arrest in which he held the boy by the throat, hit him in the head with a flashlight and held his knee on the boy's neck and upper back while he was prone, handcuffed and not resisting.

Biden pledges 'whatever it takes' to assist tornado victims

DAWSON SPRINGS, Ky.

(AP)—President Joe Biden on Wednesday pledged to do "whatever it takes, as long as it takes" to help Kentucky and other states after a series of deadly tornadoes that he said left a trail of unimaginable devastation. "You will recover and rebuild," he said.

"The scope and scale of this destruction is almost beyond belief," he said as he stood before a home reduced to a few walls and piles of rubble in Dawson Springs, one of two Kentucky towns he visited.

Biden spoke of the stress felt by victims of natural disasters such as the weekend storms that swept across eight states and said it was urgent that people be moved from emergency shelters in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, the president praised the outpouring of support from reeling communities and said the federal support he has committed will keep flowing.

"Something good has to come out of this," Biden said. "In so many places, destruction was met with compassion."

More than 30 tornadoes tore through Kentucky and seven



President Joe Biden meets with people as he surveys storm damage from tornadoes and extreme weather in Mayfield, Ky., Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021.

other states over the weekend, killing at least 88 people. Thousands of residents have lost their houses or are without power.

"I intend to do whatever it takes as long as it takes to support your state, your local leaders, as you recover and rebuild, and you will recover and rebuild," Biden said.

In Dawson Springs, Biden walked through mounds of debris. Shattered Christmas decorations were tangled up with shards of furniture and strewn clothing. Trees were uprooted among homes reduced to rubble. Over the sounds of heavy

machinery engaged in cleanup just blocks away, the president stopped to speak with storm victims, including a young girl clutching an American flag.

Biden came over to a family sitting before a home without a roof or windows, and also spoke to a group of police officers. He offered hugs to an older couple. And at one point he joked with woman wearing Green Bay Packers apparel that she should tell star NFL quarterback Aaron Rodgers that "he's gotta get the vaccine"—a reference to Rodgers' stand against the COVID-19 shot.

Asia

Powerful typhoon threatens Philippines, thousands evacuated

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Tens of thousands of people were being evacuated to safety in the southern and central Philippines on Thursday as a powerful typhoon approached and as authorities were warning the public to avoid crowds after the first infections caused by the omicron strain of the coronavirus were reported in the country, officials said.

Forecasters said they last tracked Typhoon Rai, which has sustained winds of 185 kilometers (115 miles) per hour and gusts of up to 230 kph (143 mph), about 175 kilometers (109 miles) east of southern Surigao del Norte

province. It was blowing northwestward at 25 kph (15 mph). The typhoon, locally called Odette, was expected to slam into the Dinagat Islands in the country's southeast later Thursday, forecasters said.

Several southern and central provinces were placed on typhoon alerts. Residents were warned to stay away from coastal and low-lying villages and other high-risk areas due to possible flash floods, landslides and tidal surges in or near the typhoon's path.

The Philippine coast guard said it has prohibited sea voyages in high-risk regions, stranding nearly 4,000 passen-

gers and ferry and cargo ship workers in dozens of southern and central ports. Coast guard personnel and boats have been placed on stand-by in case of contingencies, it said. Dozens of mostly domestic flights have been cancelled.

Tens of thousands of villagers have been moved in advance to emergency shelters, including schools, gymnasiums and other government buildings in voluntary or forced evacuations, officials said. The evacuations were complicating government efforts to discourage crowds after health officials this week detected the omicron variant in two travel-

ers who arrived in the country from Japan and Nigeria.

The Philippines is among the hardest hit countries in Southeast Asia by the pandemic, with confirmed infections of more than 2.8 million and more than 50,000 deaths. Quarantine restrictions have been eased and more businesses have been allowed to reopen in recent weeks after an intensified vaccination campaign caused daily infections to dwindle to a few hundred from more than 26,000 during an alarming spike in September. The detection of the omicron cases this week, however, has set off new alarms and the government re-

newed calls for people to stay away from crowds and get vaccinated immediately.

Governor Ben Evardone of Eastern Samar province said he temporarily stopped vaccinations in his region of nearly half a million people due to the approaching typhoon. More than 70 percent of villagers in the province have received at least one vaccine shot each against COVID-19 and Evardone expressed concern over vaccination delays because some vaccines stored in Eastern Samar will expire in a few months.

He said overcrowding would be hard to avoid in the limited number of evacuation

centers in his province, where more than 32,000 people have been moved to safety as the typhoon blew closer.

"It's impossible to observe social distancing, it will really be tough," Evardone told The Associated Press. "What we do is we cluster evacuees by families. We don't mix different people in the same place as a precaution."

About 20 storms and typhoons batter the Philippines each year. The archipelago is also located in the seismically active Pacific "Ring of Fire" region, making it one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

PH detects country's first omicron cases

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippines said Wednesday it has detected its first cases of the omicron strain in two travelers who arrived recently from Japan and Nigeria.

The Department of Health said the omicron variant was detected in a Filipino man, who flew back home from Japan on a Philippine Airlines flight on Dec. 1. The second case was detected in a Nigerian national, who arrived in Manila from his country via Oman Air on Nov. 30.

Both travelers tested positive for the coronavirus after arrival and the results of additional tests showed on Tuesday that they were infected by the omicron strain, the department said.

The two are confined in a government-run isolation facility without any symptoms, the health department said, adding it was checking whether any of their fellow passen-

gers in their flights to the Philippines had been infected too.

Health officials renewed their call for Filipinos to wear protective masks properly, wash and disinfect their hands frequently and stay safely away from people and big crowds.

"We continue to remind the public not to let their guard down, to religiously observe minimum public health standards and call upon all those unvaccinated to get their jabs as soon as possible," presidential spokesman Karlo Nograles told a televised news conference.

The Philippines imposed one of the strictest and longest lockdowns in the world after the pandemic hit in March last year, causing its economy to plummet by 9.5% last year in the country's worst recession since World War II.

Health officials reported just 237 confirmed infections with 100 deaths Wednesday.

SKorea bans gatherings of 5 or more people amid virus surge

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korea will prohibit private social gatherings of five or more people nationwide and force restaurants to close at 9 p.m., rolling out the country's toughest coronavirus restrictions yet as hospitals grapple with the deadliest month of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Kim Bo-kyum said Thursday that the new measures will be enforced for at least 16 days after taking effect on Saturday, saying there's an urgent need to bring the country to a "standstill" with the delta-driven surge overwhelming stretched hospitals and exhausted medical workers.

Schools in the densely pop-

ulated capital Seoul and nearby metropolitan areas, where the virus has hit hardest, will also go back to remote learning after fully reopening in November.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency reported 7,622 new cases on Thursday, close to the daily record of 7,850 set a day earlier. That brought the national caseload to 544,117, with nearly 97,000 added in December alone.

Most of the transmissions were in the capital region, where officials say more than 86% of intensive care units designated for COVID-19 treatment are already occupied amid a spike in hospitalizations and deaths.



People wait for free food outside an eatery in Ahmedabad, India, Wednesday, Jan. 20, 2021.

AP

FAO: Virus hits Asian food security, as millions go hungry

BANGKOK (AP)—The prolonged pandemic and surging prices are undermining food security for millions of people in Asia, with 1.8 billion lacking access to healthy diets, a report by the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization said Wednesday.

The report says access to food worsened in 2020 and deteriorated further this year as governments struggled to keep outbreaks at bay by restricting travel and other activities.

With progress toward alleviating hunger stalling, the FAO is urging comprehensive measures to improve food security, part of a push toward what experts call a "food systems" approach.

David Dawe, senior economist at the FAO's regional office for Asia and the Pacific, said the organization's food price index rose by nearly

a third in the past year. The price of vegetable oils, which are critical for health, soared 74%, he said.

Rising global commodity prices affect the costs for consumers, in "another blow to the poor, who spend a large percentage of their income on food and are struggling to recover from the impacts of COVID-19," Dawe said.

"Food producers have also faced more recent challenges after the initial impact of the pandemic including rising fuel and fertilizer prices," he said.

A transformation of systems to improve food security needs to revolve around the needs of the many small-scale farmers in the region and other vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples, women and children, the FAO report says.

It notes that nearly 16% of people in South Asia are un-

dernourished and that for the region as a whole undernourishment is at its highest level in a decade, at 8.7%.

Access to adequate food is worst in North Korea, with more than 40% of its people undernourished. But hunger is an urgent problem also in Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

Conditions across the region are still better than they were in 2000, but progress in recent years has slowed and in some cases reversed. In 10 countries in the region, more than 30% of children under 5 years old suffer from stunting, or low height for age—a common measure for how well fed they are. In another eight countries, between 20%-30% do.

Such deprivation has long-lasting consequences, as children suffer from weaker health and fail to achieve

their full potential.

Millions among those children suffer from wasting, a potentially more dangerous condition due to inadequate food or prolonged illness. In 2020, more than 31 million children in the Asia-Pacific were affected by wasting, and that number could rise to 40 million by the end of 2022 if current trends continue.

The FAO and others working on hunger are urging that efforts focus on broader issues than just raising the amount of food that is produced—a crucial step but one that does not ensure families can actually afford healthy diets.

The challenge is in devising policies to improve food systems to cope with pandemics, natural disasters, poverty, political instability and other challenges that get in the way of improved access to enough food.

World

UK COVID cases hit record; top doctor warns of worse to come

LONDON (AP)—The U.K. recorded the highest number of confirmed new COVID-19 infections Wednesday since the pandemic began, and England's chief medical officer warned the situation is likely to get worse as the omicron variant drives a new wave of illness during the Christmas holidays.

Professor Chris Whitty described the current situation as two epidemics in one—with omicron infections rising rapidly even as the country continues to grapple with the older delta variant, which is still causing a large number of infections. Public health officials expect omicron to become the dominant variant

across the U.K. within days. Omicron already accounts for a majority of cases in London.

The U.K. recorded 78,610 new infections on Wednesday, 16% higher than the previous record set in January. While scientists are still studying the risks posed by the highly transmissible omicron variant, Whitty said the public should be braced for the figures to continue rising in coming weeks.

"There are several things we don't know," Whitty said. "But all the things we do know are bad, the principal one being the speed at which this is moving. It is moving at an absolutely phenomenal pace."

The comments came on the

day that the U.K. government implemented new rules ordering masks to be worn in most indoor settings in England and requiring proof of vaccination or a negative coronavirus test to enter nightclubs and large crowded events.



Whitty

Britain is also accelerating its the national vaccination program, with a goal of offering a booster dose to every adult by the end of December. The government said within days it will open new mass vaccination centers at sports stadiums around

the country, including Wembley, the 90,000-seat national soccer stadium in London.

Whitty advised people to limit their social contacts, putting a priority on those that are the most important.

"I am afraid there will be an increasing number of omicron patients going into the NHS, going into hospital, going into intensive care, and exact ratios

we don't yet know, but there will be substantial numbers," he said. "That will begin to become apparent, in my view, fairly soon after Christmas."

Despite the surge in infections, daily coronavirus-related deaths in the U.K. are well below last winter's peak. Britain recorded 165 deaths on Wednesday, compared with a record 1,820 on Jan. 20.

Haiti in mourning after tanker fireball that killed 75

CAP-HAITIEN, Haiti (AP)—Nelly Joseph picked through the twisted metal roofing, overturned furnishings and rubble of her charred home Wednesday, unsure of where her dead son had been buried or where she would sleep after blasts from a flipped gas tanker destroyed their house.

Late Monday night, Joseph heard a loud noise and got out

of bed. She heard people saying a gas truck had crashed, so she grabbed her identification card and went out to join them. With fuel in short supply all across Haiti, some neighbors in the northern city of Cap-Haitien saw a chance to scoop up valuable spilled gasoline.

Then the first explosions occurred. Her son Josue Junior Julemis, 36, hustled two of his children to safety. Then he re-

turned to get his identification card from their home.

That's when a much stronger explosion destroyed the three-room house they shared, blackening its walls and blowing off the roof.

Joseph's son was burned all over his face and body, she said. He died at the hospital. His wife and 14-year-old daughter were burned too and hospitalized.

The city buried his body in a mass grave, but Joseph doesn't know where.

He was one of at least 75 people killed in the explosion, said Jean-Henri Petit, coordinator of the civil protection agency.

"He was a great guy," Joseph said through tears. "Whenever I'm sick he pays for me at the hospital. Now he is gone, if I die I don't have anyone to bury me."

WORLD BRIEFS

Music producer, 8 others killed in Dominican plane crash

SANTO DOMINGO, Dominican Republic (AP)—A small plane attempting to land minutes after beginning a flight to Florida crashed in the Dominican Republic on Wednesday, killing all nine people aboard, including Puerto Rican music producer José Ángel Hernández, the aircraft's operating company reported. Helidosa Aviation Group said on its Twitter account that the Gulfstream jet was carrying two crew members and seven passengers. The plane had departed from El Higueiro airport for Orlando, Fla., shortly before seeking to land at Las Americas International Airport in the Dominican Republic's capital, Santo Domingo, the company said. The company gave no details on why the pilots aborted the flight or possible causes of the crash. The airport shut down operations after the accident, canceling hundreds of flights.

Hernández, 38, better known as "Flow La Movie," produced Urban Latin songs such as "Te Boté" sung by Bad Bunny and Ozuna. He also produced "La Jeepeta" by Nio Garcia, Brray and Juanka and "Wow Remix," in which artists Bryant Myers, Arcangel, Nicky Jam, El Alfa and Darell participated.

Omicron to be dominant variant in EU by mid-January

BRUSSELS (AP)—Omicron is expected to be the dominant coronavirus variant in the European Union's 27 nations by mid-January, the bloc's top official said Wednesday amid concerns

that a dramatic rise in infections will leave Europe shrouded in gloom during the holiday season. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the EU is well prepared to fight omicron with 66.6% of its population fully vaccinated. She expressed disappointment that the pandemic will again disrupt year-end celebrations but said she was confident the EU has the "strength" and "means" to overcome COVID-19. "Like many of you, I'm sad that once again this Christmas will be overshadowed by the pandemic," she said.

Canada advises against foreign travel, Ontario limits events

TORONTO (AP)—The Canadian government on Wednesday advised Canadians against all non-essential international travel, and the largest province of Ontario capped capacity at large events like NBA and NHL games at 50% because of the new coronavirus variant. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canadians shouldn't travel right now and anyone entering the country is going to face extra barriers like testing. "It's the last thing families want to be dealing with right now, but COVID in the presence of omicron is back with a vengeance," Trudeau said. Ontario Premier Doug Ford said all adults in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, can book virus booster shots beginning Monday if three months have passed since their second vaccine dose. Canada trails the U.S., Britain and other countries in getting citizens booster shots.



Nelly Joseph walks in her burnt home in Cap-Haitien Haiti, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021. Joseph said her son and granddaughter died in the home when a gasoline truck overturned and exploded, killing dozens of residents.

AP

Germany expels Russian diplomats over state-ordered killing

BERLIN (AP)—Germany announced Wednesday it is expelling two Russian diplomats after a German court concluded that Moscow was behind the killing of a Chechen man in Berlin two years ago.

Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock called the state-ordered killing a "grave breach of German law and the sovereignty of the Federal Republic of Germany." Russia's ambassador in Berlin was summoned to discuss the court's finding and informed of the diplomats' expulsion, she said.

The 2019 brazen daylight killing of Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen of Chechen ethnicity, sparked outrage in Berlin and prompted the German government to expel two other Russian diplomats at the time—a move Russia swiftly reciprocated.

The two diplomats being expelled now are linked to Russian intelligence agencies, according to Associated Press sources.

Judges at Berlin's regional court on Wednesday convicted 56-year-old Vadim Krasikov

of the killing, but said he had acted on the orders of Russian federal authorities, who provided him with a false identity, a fake passport and the resources to carry out the hit near Berlin's Kleiner Tiergarten park on Aug. 23, 2019.

"The central government of the Russian Federation was the author of this crime," presiding judge Olaf Arnoldi said, labeling the killing "state terrorism."

Baerbock said during a call Tuesday with her Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, she had made clear that Ger-

many wants an "open and honest exchange with Russia," and that this should happen "on the basis of international law and mutual respect."

"It is clear that acts such as the Tiergarten murder weigh heavily on this relationship," she said. "The German government will do everything necessary to ensure that security in our country and the respect for our laws is ensured."

After Wednesday's verdict, Russia's ambassador in Berlin issued a statement rejecting allegations of Russian involvement in the killing.

Off The Wall

'Panther' the cat rescued after days on pole perch

AURORA, Colo. (AP)—For at least two days and maybe more, residents of a suburban Denver neighborhood worried about the fate of a black cat called Panther who was perched atop a 36-foot (11-meter) utility pole.

Panther stayed put despite efforts by his co-owner, Alexis Soberanis and others to coax him down in Aurora. Neither pleading nor the enticement of food did the trick, Sentinel Colorado reports.

The cat went missing earlier this week and was first spotted atop the pole on Wednesday.

"Everybody's been just like, 'Put food down and it'll come down eventually,'" said Aurora resident Jessica Meadows on Friday morning, when the



Aurora firefighters rescue Panther, a local cat who's been stuck on top of a 36-foot-high light pole for days, possibly four days on Friday, Dec. 10, 2021 in Aurora, Colo.

PHILIP B. POSTON/SENTINEL COLORADO VIA AP

city received its first snow of the season. "That's not going to happen."

Meadows said she and other neighbors called Aurora animal control and Xcel Energy for help.

"Everyone says they can't do anything," Meadows said.

Standard practice, according to another utility is to give cats time to make their way back down on their own, Sentinel Colorado reported.

Teachers crawling for cash event prompts apology

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP)—The organizers of a fundraiser that featured teachers on their hands and knees grabbing for dollar bills at a junior hockey league game in South Dakota are apologizing after the event drew criticism.

The "Dash For Cash" Saturday night in Sioux Falls was a competition in which 10 local

teachers were selected to collect money for school projects. They had five minutes to collect as many of the 5,000 \$1 bills that were spread out on carpet at center ice between periods at the Sioux Falls Stampede's arena.

Critics on social media called the event demeaning. Loren Paul, president of the South Dakota Education As-

sociation, said it showed that the state needs to do better for its teachers and students when it comes to funding education.

"While the Dash for the Cash may have been well-intentioned, it only underscores the fact that educators don't have the resources necessary to meet the needs of their students," Paul said.

OFFBEAT BRIEFS

Colorado dog that was missing for 2 weeks rescued from ledge

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP)—A dog missing for two weeks in Colorado was rescued from a ledge about 50 yards (46 meters) above a creek and is now back home. An animal control officer with the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region anchored herself to a wooden fence and rappelled down to the dog using a mountaineering harness and rope provided by a man living nearby during the Dec. 1 rescue, the humane society said Monday on Facebook. The dog later identified through her microchip and tag as Jessie Lee immediately wagged her and crawled towards the officer but the ground started slipping out from underneath the dog, the humane society said. The officer put a catchpole around the dog's neck and shoulder to slowly pull Jessie Lee closer safely so she would not fall. Another officer then lowered a second rope which was tied into a makeshift harness for the dog and pulled them both up to safety, the humane society said. Jessie Lee was reunited with her owners, who had been looking for daily since she went missing two weeks ago, the humane society said.

'Large, pink & elusive:' S. Carolina police seek ruinous pig

SUMTER, S.C. (AP)—Authorities in South Carolina are searching for a pig that they say has been "wreaking havoc" in people's yards. On Monday, police in Sumter posted on their Facebook page that the department had received calls over the weekend about a "large, pink and elusive" pig suspected of causing damage in some neighborhoods. Alongside the

post were photos of a large pig, as well as large dirt piles the yard of a home. Officers warned people not to try to approach the hefty hog, writing that "its size alone is of concern." Police say they have asked officials with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources for help in finding the porcine renegade.

'Bah-boom, bah-boom': Acornucopia of food fattens squirrels

DAMARISCOTTA, Maine (AP)—Humans aren't the only species packing on extra pounds during the pandemic. Some squirrels are letting themselves go, too. Many squirrels are eating well this fall in New England. But one portly squirrel is so big it earned the nickname, "Fatty McFatterson." Most squirrels sprint or scoot. This one lumbers and waddles after supplementing nature's bounty this fall by helping himself to seeds that fall to the ground from bird feeders. "He's clearly the alpha of the yard," said Beth Ditkoff, of Damariscotta, told The Associated Press. "You think of them as scampering around. He's bah-boom, bah-boom." It turns out that many pint-sized rodents aren't so pint-sized as they gorge on abundant beach nuts, hazelnuts, acorns and a bumper crop of mushrooms this fall, Shevenell Webb, furbearer biologist with the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, told the Bangor Daily News. "Many species of wildlife can pack on some extra pounds, but their thick, fluffy fur coat may also make them appear larger in winter," she said. Unlike many other mammals, squirrels don't hibernate, though they do spend a fair amount of time in their nests in colder weather.

Science and Technology

Data says omicron is milder, better at evading vaccines

JOHANNESBURG (AP)—The omicron variant is offering more hints about what it may have in store as it spreads around the globe: A highly transmissible virus that may cause less severe disease, and one that can be slowed—but not stopped—by today's vaccines.

An analysis Tuesday of data from South Africa, where the new variant is driving a surge in infections, suggests the Pfizer vaccine offers less defense against infection from omicron and reduced, but still good, protection from hospitalization.

The findings are prelimi-



Takalane Mulaudzi, 29, grimaces as she gets her COVID-19 vaccination at Soweto's Baragwanath hospital Monday Dec. 13, 2021.

AP

nary and have not been peer-reviewed—the gold standard in scientific research—but they line up with other early

data about omicron's behavior, including that it seems to be more easily spread from person to person.

There are some tricks if you don't want Windows 11 download

Q: I have a lot of custom software on my "Windows 10 Home" PC that may not work on Windows 11. As a result, I don't want to upgrade to Windows 11 until I can no longer get security updates for Windows 10. But it looks like avoiding Windows 11 is hard. What do you suggest?

A: There are several ways you can avoid getting Windows 11 on your PC. And it's a perfectly reasonable strategy if you'd rather keep using Home or Pro versions of Windows 10 until Microsoft stops providing security updates for them in October 2025.

Here are the methods, which range from sensible to impractical to risky:

■ If your PC lacks a certain computer chip, it can't handle Windows 11 and you can forget about the upgrade. The chip, called a "Trusted Platform Module" version 2.0 (see tinyurl.com/2p8urcun), is located on the main circuit board and handles several security-related tasks, such as data encryption. If your PC lacks this chip, Microsoft won't let you download Windows 11 to your PC. (To find out if your PC has the chip, see tinyurl.com/26v2ejd6.)

■ If Windows 11 is downloaded and installed on your PC, you have 10 days to revert to Windows 10 without losing any personal data. To do that, go to Windows

TECH Q&A

By STEVE ALEXANDER
Star Tribune

Email tech questions to Steve Alexander at steve.j.alexander@gmail.com. Please include a full name, city and phone number.



11 Settings, click "system," then click "recovery." Select "go back." Follow the directions and your PC will be returned to Windows 10. After 10 days, this process doesn't work. (See tinyurl.com/nyt4p4x8.)

■ Windows 11 is installed via the "Windows update" function of Windows 10, which can be paused for seven days. If you're willing to keep pausing the updates every seven days, you'll never get Windows 11. However, you also won't get any other updates, including those for security, so this method is impractical for anything but a temporary delay in getting the new operating system. (For details about this and the following methods of blocking the Windows 11 download, see tinyurl.com/2p8ph86y.)

■ You can turn off Windows 10 "update services," which means Windows will never update unless you tell it to. Like pausing Windows update, this isn't practical for the long run.

■ If you use Windows 10 Home, you can edit your PC's registry, a database of settings, to prevent Windows 11 from being down-

loaded to your PC. However, I advise against making changes to a PC's registry because if you make a mistake, the PC may not work.

■ Readers who use Windows 10 Pro can make changes to the "Local Group Policy Editor" that will prevent Windows 11 from being downloaded. Experts consider using the Local Group Policy Editor a safer way to make PC changes than using the registry.

Q: I want to install a video doorbell and some outside cameras, but I don't know enough about home security systems. Are there any beginner's guides to video home security?

A: Last January's Consumer Reports contains a buying guide for home security cameras (tinyurl.com/4u4w7x7x). It discusses the pros and cons of using video doorbells and wireless security cameras, and how to decide what you need. The online Tom's Guide from September (tinyurl.com/tjcnx7s8) compares do-it-yourself home security systems, most of which have the option to connect to outside professional monitoring services.

Life & Style

Appellate judges raise doubts about Weinstein's conviction

NEW YORK (AP)—A New York appeals court blasted Manhattan prosecutors Wednesday for filling out Harvey Weinstein's rape trial last year with what one judge deemed "incredibly prejudicial testimony" from women whose allegations weren't part of the criminal charges against him—a strategy that now has the potential to jeopardize the disgraced movie mogul's conviction.

Members of a five-judge panel in the state's intermediate appeals court appeared incensed with Judge James Burke's decision to allow the

witnesses and for another ruling that cleared the way for prosecutors to confront Weinstein with evidence about other misbehavior if he had testified.

Several judges on the panel appeared open to considering reversing Weinstein's conviction and ordering a new trial. A decision isn't expected until January.

Judge Sallie Manzanet-Daniels was particularly vocal, saying that prosecutors had piled on with "incredibly prejudicial" testimony from additional witnesses and that socking away details about Weinstein's behavior—in

some cases boorish but not sexual—amounted to overkill.

"Let's inflame the jury's heart by telling them that he beat up his brother during a meeting. I just I don't see how there is a balance there on that," Manzanet-Daniels said, challenging a lawyer from the Manhattan district attorney's office who implored the judges to uphold Weinstein's conviction.

Weinstein, 69, was convicted in February 2020 of a criminal sex act for forcibly performing oral sex on a TV and film production assistant in 2006 and rape in the third

degree for an attack on an aspiring actress in 2013. He was acquitted of first-degree rape and two counts of predatory sexual assault stemming from actor Annabella Sciorra's allegations of a mid-1990s rape.

The verdict was a landmark in the #MeToo movement that was spawned by women coming forward with allegations against Weinstein. He maintains his innocence and contends that any sexual activity was consensual.

Burke, the Manhattan judge who presided over Weinstein's trial, allowed prosecutors to bolster their case with testimo-

ny from three women who alleged Weinstein also violated them but whose claims did not lead to charges in the New York case.

Rules on calling witnesses to testify about so-called "prior bad acts" vary by state and was an issue in Bill Cosby's successful appeal of his sexual assault conviction in Pennsylvania. New York's rules, shaped by a landmark decision in a 1901 poisoning case, are among the more restrictive.

Weinstein's lawyers argued that extra testimony went be-



Weinstein

yond what's normally allowed—detailing motive, opportunity, intent or a common scheme or plan—and essentially put the ex-studio boss on trial for crimes he wasn't charged with and hadn't had an opportunity to defend himself against.

Burke's ruling allowing prosecutors to use horror stories from Weinstein's past to attack his credibility worked to prevent him from taking the witness stand, Weinstein lawyer Barry Kamins told the appellate panel.

Penelope Cruz honored by MoMA for her career in cinema

NEW YORK (AP)—During a tribute to her career at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MoMA), Penelope Cruz recalled the Betamax videotape store that opened in her neighborhood, in a suburb of Madrid, when she was a child and that made her discover cinema.

It was there where she rented all the films of Spanish movie director Pedro Almodóvar, she said.

"I watched, and I laughed, I cried, and I learned," she said at a star-studded benefit Tuesday evening at the museum. "I would not be here tonight, being honored by MoMa, if I had not had the privilege of working with brilliant directors who have inspired me, taught me, helped me grow as an artist and as a person. I want to thank them all tonight, and specially my Pedro."

The recognition comes



Penelope Cruz attends the MoMA Film Benefit presented by CHANEL honoring Penelope Cruz at the Museum of Modern Art on Tuesday, Dec. 14, 2021, in New York. AP

a decade after the museum paid the same tribute to Almodóvar, who has worked with Cruz in seven films. The latest movie by the director, "Parallel Mothers," starring Cruz, opens in the United States on December 24. On Monday, it received two Golden Globe nominations.

An exciting moment of the night was when Almodóvar sent a video message to Cruz, congratulating her on the recognition.

He recalled in the video a dialogue with the actress that they had when they promoted "All About My Mother" (1999).

Happy 100th, bloody mary: Paris marks cocktail's birthday

PARIS (AP)—Harry's Bar in Paris is celebrating the 100th birthday of the bloody mary, the vodka-tomato juice cocktail believed to have been invented at the iconic watering hole in 1921.

The centenary events this week bring a welcome respite from winter gloom and worries about the omicron variant of the coronavirus.

The bar is carefully checking COVID-19 health passes as foreign visitors gather to sample the drink closely associated with Harry's Bar, whose patrons over the past century have included writers Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

According to the history of Harry's, bartender Fernand Petiot invented the cocktail, and the recipe was first published in a book called "Harry's ABC of Cocktails" in 1921. The bar serves an estimated 12,000 bloody marys a year.

"It's a classic drink," bar-

tender Dante Agnelli said while demonstrating the mixology behind the drink, ingredient by ingredient: salt and pepper, Tabasco sauce, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, vodka and tomato juice.

"You make it directly in the glass," Agnelli said as he stood at the counter where Petiot first performed the now well-established ritual 100 years ago, at the dawn of what became known as the roaring 1920s.

Harry's Bar plans to host a celebration on Thursday night despite concerns about the spread of omicron variant of the coronavirus in Europe and a surge in new virus infections across France.

Franz-Arthur MacElhone, a great-grandson of bar founder Harry MacElhone, said the celebration would take place in line with government regulations: the health passes of patrons from around the world will be checked, hand sanitiz-

ers will be distributed, and bar staff will wear masks.

In recent days, the French government expanded the places where passes are required, including all restaurants and a growing number of events and venues. To get one, people must show proof of full vaccination, a negative virus test less than 24 hours old, or recent recovery from COVID-19.

The French government closed nightclubs and tightened social distancing measures but is trying to avoid a new lockdown.

The health protocol is the only visible change inside the bar that used to be located on New York's 7th Avenue before it was dismantled, shipped to Europe and rebuilt in central Paris in 1911.

For Harry's patrons, the timeless décor is a reassuring fixture, particularly at a time of uncertainty due to the pandemic.

Discovery of neighbor's past shocks new friend

DEAR ABBY: I recently learned my neighbor shot and killed her two young kids (14 and 2) more than 20 years ago and served only half of her prison sentence—six years. The newspaper said she called the police herself, confessed and was arrested and incarcerated.

I have only known her for two years. She's very reserved and keeps to herself. She seems paranoid, but she has warned up to me because we both dabble in art. Since I've learned this information from the internet, I don't know how to feel about her. This was a horrendous act, and I'm having a hard time processing. What are your thoughts?

PERPLEXED IN THE SOUTH

DEAR PERPLEXED: Why did you find it necessary to research your neighbor? Did someone suggest it, or do you do that with all of your neighbors? If what you discovered is indeed true, there must be a good reason why she was freed after serving only half her sentence. I think, because you have questions, the person you should ask is her.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have known my ex's friend for more than 12 years. Long story short, we are now "friends with benefits." When I stay over, he almost always portrays himself as a good catch, but when it's time to act like one outside his home, he doesn't. He

says, "Dating is too hard," and "We should take it one day at a time." He constantly tells me I will make "someone" a good wife and that I should have no problem finding someone. Must I just enjoy the best benefits I have ever had, or should I move on?

CONFLICTED IN MASSACHUSETTS

DEAR CONFLICTED: Much depends upon what you really want. If what you want is a husband, children and a future, you should take this man's advice and find "someone" other than him. If it's great sex and nothing more, you must decide whether you want to stick around for the (wild) ride. No one can decide that for you.

■ ■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have a dear friend of many years who makes a habit around her birthday of getting as much free food as she can from restaurants and stores. She collects coupons for birthday freebies and makes sure to cash them in, whether it's a free soft drink or dessert or lunch. She brags to me about how much stuff she got free and put in the freezer for later. Her husband does the same thing around his birthday. Neither one works, and both of them live on Social Security. They are not poor; they travel often. Is this extreme resourcefulness or is it more like greed and gluttony? I'm leaning toward the latter.

BITING MY TONGUE IN TEXAS

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
FROM UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



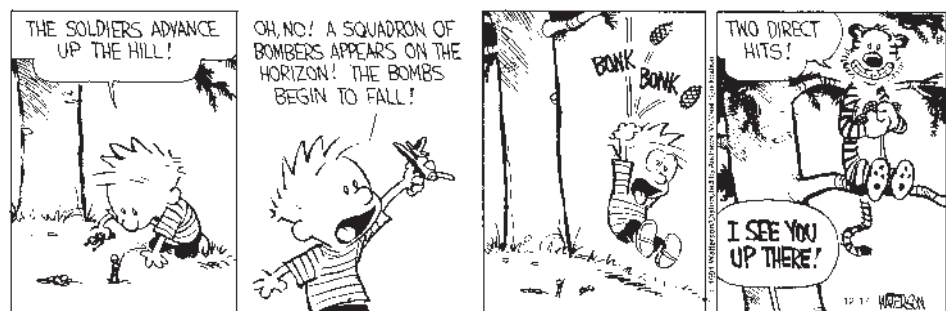
DEAR BITING: I am leaning toward the former. This couple is taking advantage of what is offered. They are not harming anyone, many people do it. It's common practice, and there is nothing wrong with it. Stores and restaurants make these offers available for promotional purposes. Your relationship with these dear friends will last a lot longer if you judge them less.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

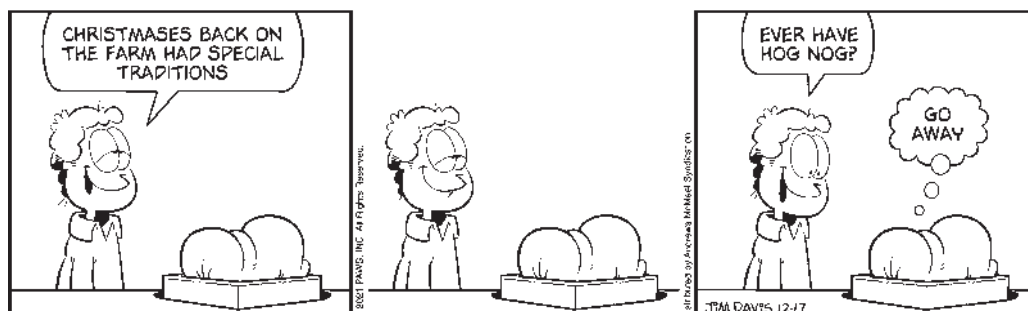
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

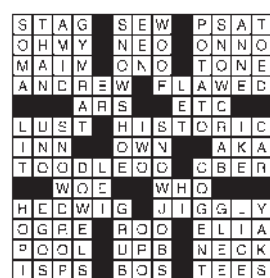


CROSSWORD

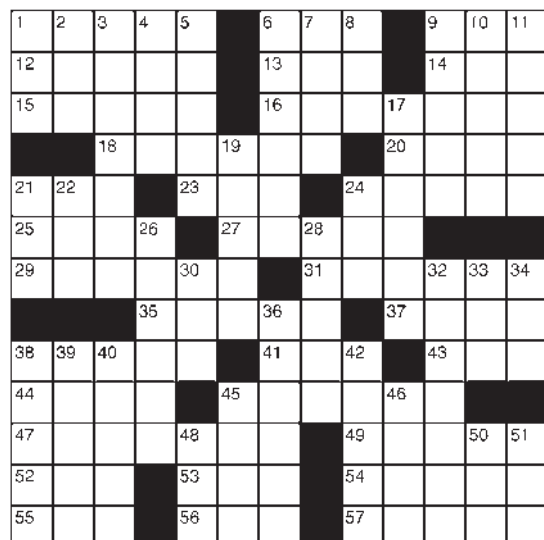
By Eugene Sheffer

- ACROSS**
- 1 Coffee flavor
6 Smidgen
9 Trendy
12 James — Garfield
13 Storefront sign abbr.
14 Chemical suffix
15 "Fences" actress Davis
16 Auto safety feature
18 Chinese dumpling
20 Sty cry
21 Cleric's garment
23 Football's Par-seghian
24 Author Joyce Carol —
25 Piglet's pop
27 One-eighty
29 Steve of "The Office"
31 Appeared to be
35 Intimidate, with "out"
- DOWN**
- 37 Kentucky Derby winner —
38 Encrusted
41 Devilish laugh
43 Collar
44 Met melody
45 Moolah
47 Icon lineup
49 Temple leader
52 Pinafore letters
53 Cravat
54 Where the elated walk
55 Talk and talk
56 Snake's warning
57 "Phooey!"
- 19 Without question**
21 Alphabet starter
22 Mauna —
24 Mined-over matter
26 Undo, as a law
28 Theater worker
30 "Acid"
32 Hotel amenity
33 Actress Longoria
34 Wee dollop
36 Household tasks
38 Heath-cliff's love
39 Bakery lure
40 News-stand
42 Egret's cousin
45 Banquet platform
46 Lion's pride?
48 "Butter" K-pop band
50 Iota
51 Apr. addressee

Solution time: 25 mins.



Yesterday's answer 12-17



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Milla Jovovich, 46; Bill Pullman, 68; Eugene Levy, 75; Ernie Hudson, 76.

Happy Birthday: Airtight plans are encouraged if you want to bulldoze your way through the upcoming year without a hitch. A little too much or too little will throw you off course. Balance, fair play and sheer determination will enhance your chance to outmaneuver anyone who tries to stand in your way. Keep the momentum flowing, and shoot for the stars. Your numbers are 5, 13, 24, 28, 32, 41, 49.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Pay more attention to what's ahead of you and less to what's behind. Letting go of what's no longer working for you will liberate you from routine and boredom. Put your time, energy and skills into something meaningful. A proposal looks inviting. ★★★★★

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Uncertainty will leave you feeling restless. Rethink your long-term plans, and adjust to suit trends. A heartfelt discussion with someone you respect will put your mind at ease and encourage you to put your energy where it counts. ★★★

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): The changes happening around you will turn into a learning experience. Be receptive, and everything will fall into place. An interesting connection you make will turn into a helpful and resourceful partnership. A financial gain or contract looks promising. ★★★

CANCER (June 21-July 22): A learning curve is apparent. Be open to suggestions and willing to do the legwork, and you

will achieve your goal. A promise or commitment will bring you closer to someone special. A change you make will get positive results. ★★★

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Surround yourself with reliable people who helped you in the past. The way you present what you want to pursue will lead to interest and backing that can help you reach your goal. Make sure your research is foolproof. ★★★★★

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Keep your facts straight, and you'll avoid trouble. Use your imagination when trying to please someone you love. Plan a special event that will put you in the spotlight. You will accomplish plenty if you are direct about what you want. ★★

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Embrace life and be a participant, and you'll rise to the top. How you treat others and what you bring to the table will put you in a leadership position. Kindness and generosity will count if you want to get your way. ★★★★★

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Take an innovative approach to life, and you'll discover something about who you are and what makes you happy. Reevaluate your current situation, and you'll recognize what to initiate to acquire peace of mind. Personal growth and a healthy attitude are favored. ★★★

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Remember the past and how others treated you before you trust again. Scrutinize situations thoroughly, and determine what's best for you before you proceed. A friendly demeanor will protect you from an unsavory situation. Take the

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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high road. ★★★★★

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Energy, passion and determination will help you flourish. If you do something uplifting or participate in something that makes a difference, you will gain significant satisfaction and knowledge that points you in an exciting direction. Follow your heart. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Spend more time at home. Prepare for upcoming events. Don't let a last-minute change of plans ruin your day. Do what you can, and you'll be happy with the results. An energetic approach to life and love will pay off. ★★★★★

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): You'll misread what someone is trying to convey. Don't overreact or start a feud when keeping the peace is in your best interest. Use intelligence to combat any negativity you encounter, and offer help to those who have lost their way. ★★

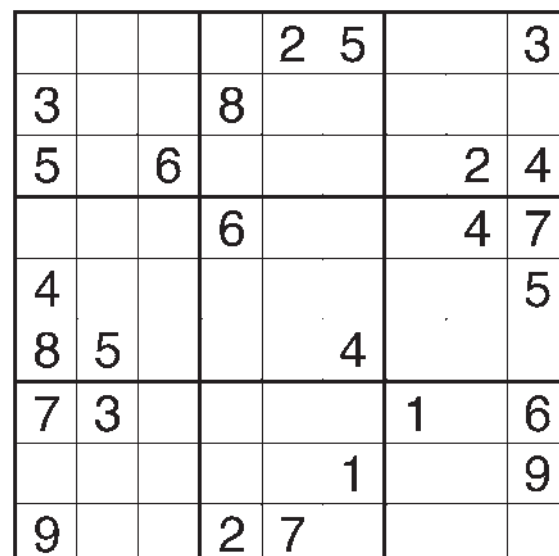
Birthday Baby: You are intelligent, curious and playful. You are engaging and passionate.

★ Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ★★ You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ★★★ Focus and you'll reach your goals. ★★★★★ Aim high; start new projects. ★★★★★ Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



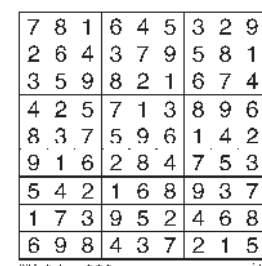
Difficulty Level ★★★★★

12/17

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

CANADIAN MAPLE SYRUP

Solution: 8 letters

M R A F Y T S E R O F U D G E
S A E L D E R O S D S P O U T
R E T I N T L D E T U R H P A
A L L K A O R N O M O U C A M
J C T I C O S U P O S O I L I
T T A P P I N G N N W P R C L
N A S T Y S W B A K E E D O C
E A T Y K S E S F L T E R U P
I L E D P A E O N L L E A T L
D L B R Q P R L I U A O I D A
E I I I S U T F F R R V N O R
R N R L T E E W S F A B O O U
G A C L L I O B H E A T W R T
N V H S U G A R E T A W N E A
I R E B M A I T O C S A V O N

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12/17

Amber, Bake, Birch, Boil, Candy, Clear, Climate, Color, Density, Drain, Drill, Drops, Elder, Farm, Filter, Flavor, Forest, Fudge, Gallon, Heat, Ingredient, Jars, Natural, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Outdoor, Pour, Pump, Pure, Quebec, Rich, Roots, Sap, Soil, Spices, Spout, Spring, Sugar, Sweet, Tapping, Taste, Tint, Tree, Trunk, Vanilla, Waffles, Water, Wood

Yesterday's Answer: Hydrate

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Austin Reaves' 3 gives Lakers 107-104 win over Mavs in OT



DALLAS (AP)—Rookie Austin Reaves swished a 3-pointer with 0.9 seconds left in overtime to give the Los Angeles Lakers a 107-104 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Wednesday night.

Reaves' basket, his fifth from behind the arc on six tries, came from 25 feet on a kickout from Russell Westbrook. He had the Lakers' only overtime points scored by someone other than the team's Big Three of LeBron James, Anthony Davis and Westbrook.

"There was about one second left, and I didn't have anything to do but shoot it," said Reaves, who played two seasons each at Wichita State and Oklahoma, signing a two-way contract with the Lakers in August that was converted to a regular contract in September. "Great pass, and I made a shot." James scored 24 points, Westbrook added 23 and Davis had his sixth double-double of the season with 20 points and 12 rebounds after missing two games with a sore left knee.

But it was the undrafted player who made sure they left with a victory.

"We've got a lot of trust in whoever's on the floor, including the rook," James said. "Obviously, it showed on that last possession."

Jalen Brunson scored 25 points and Kristaps Porzingis had his eighth double-double this season with 23 points and 12 rebounds for the Mavericks, who played their third straight game without All-Star guard Luka Doncic.

"Man, it sucks," Porzingis said, rubbing his face. "Oh, my god. We should have got this one."

Brunson said he'd seen Reaves play in college.

"He has game," Brunson said. "You've got to respect him, and he was able to make shots."

Pelicans 113, Thunder 110

In Oklahoma City, Devonte' Graham's 60-foot heave at the buzzer lifted New Orleans past Oklahoma City.

Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander hit an off-balance 30-footer to tie the score with 2.3 seconds remaining. The Pelicans inbounded to Graham, who launched the ball from near the 3-point arc on the other end of the floor.

Brandon Ingram scored 34 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 19 points and 16 rebounds for the Pelicans. Graham finished with 15 points and eight assists. Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 33 points.

Bucks 114, Pacers 99

In Milwaukee, playing without stars Giannis Antetokounmpo and Khris Middleton, Milwaukee leaned on Jrue Holiday and had a 21-0 fourth-quarter run to beat Indiana.

Holiday had 26 points and 14 assists. Tied at 87 after three quarters, Milwaukee surged ahead early in the fourth quarter with the big run. The Bucks raced to a 112-92 lead with just over three minutes left, with Pat Connaughton and Jordan Nwora each scoring eight points during the run. Both finished with 20 points.

Antetokounmpo entered the league's health and safety protocols list Tuesday. Middleton has a hyperextended left knee. Indiana coach Rick Carlisle missed his third game since testing positive for COVID-19. Assistant Lloyd Pierce filled in.

Heat 101, 76ers 96

In Philadelphia, Gabe Vincent hit a key 3-pointer in the fourth quarter and scored 26 points, Duncan Robinson had 21 points and short-handed Miami built a 23-point lead and held on to beat Philadelphia.

Kyle Lowry added 14 points



Los Angeles Lakers' Russell Westbrook (0), Anthony Davis, center left, Wayne Ellington (2) and others celebrate with Austin Reaves, center being lifted, after Reaves scored a three-point basket with seconds left in overtime of an NBA basketball game against the Dallas Mavericks in Dallas, Wednesday, Dec. 15, 2021.

for the Heat. They had only 10 available players—seven undrafted.

Joel Embiid had 17 points and 14 rebounds in his return from right rib soreness after missing Philadelphia's loss Monday night at Memphis. Tyrese Maxey led the 76ers with 27 points, and Tobias Harris had 24.

Both teams—especially the Heat—were ravaged by injury, illness and protocols. Philadelphia's Georges Niang and Miami's Caleb Martin sat out because of the NBA's COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Martin missed his third straight game. Miami's top three scorers—Jimmy Butler, Tyler Herro and Bam Adebayo—sat out.

Hawks 111, Magic 99

In Orlando, Fla., Trae Young played through a minor neck injury to score 28 points, John Collins had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Atlanta beat Or-

lando to end a two-game losing streak.

Young left for the locker room late in the third quarter after Cole Anthony hit him with a shoulder in the face on an offensive foul. Young was deemed to have a neck cramp and returned with 5:31 remaining after Orlando got to 104-84. Terrence Ross scored 18 points for Orlando.

Cavaliers 124, Rockets 89

In Cleveland, Darius Garland scored 21 points, Isaac Okoro added 20 and Cleveland won its fifth straight, routing Houston.

Cleveland improved to 18-12 with its first five-game winning streak since March 28-April 5, 2018—when LeBron James was on the roster.

Houston coach Stephen Silas walked off the court late in the first quarter and was treated for dehydration. Assistant John Lucas directed the team the rest of the way.

Rookie Alperen Sengun had season highs of 19 points and 11 rebounds.

Timberwolves 124, Nuggets 107

In Denver, Anthony Edwards made 10 3-pointers and scored 38 points and Minnesota snapped a 12-game losing streak to Denver.

Karl-Anthony Towns scored 32 points, and D'Angelo Russell added 16 for the Timberwolves. They shot 23 for 48 from beyond the arc, including 16 makes in the first half.

Denver's Nikola Jokic had 27 points, 10 rebounds and 11 assists for his sixth triple-double of the season and the 63rd of his career.

Jazz 124, Clippers 103

In Salt Lake City, Donovan Mitchell scored 19 of his 27 points in the second half, Bojan Bogdanovic made six 3-pointers and Utah beat Los Angeles for its eighth straight victory.

Jordan Clarkson scored 21, Rudy Gobert had 20 points and 17 rebounds, and Bogdanovic added 20 points.

Marcus Morris had 24 points for the Clippers.

Grizzlies 113, Trail Blazers 103

In Portland, Ore., Desmond Bane scored 23 points and Memphis beat Portland for its fourth victory in a row.

Dillon Brooks scored 22 points and Steven Adams had 10 points and 14 rebounds for the Grizzlies, winners of nine of their last 10 games.

Norman Powell scored 25 points in Portland's seventh straight loss.

The teams meet again on Sunday in Memphis.

Kings 119, Wizards 105

In Sacramento, Calif., De'Aaron Fox scored 28 points and short-handed Sacramento beat slumping Washington.

Harrison Barnes added 19 points, 15 in a dominant fourth quarter when he had a pair of three-point plays and a 3-pointer, to help Sacramento end a three-game losing streak.

Kings interim coach Alvin Gentry and players Marvin Bagley III and Terence Davis were placed in the NBA's health and safety protocols earlier in the day. Assistant Doug Christie coached the team.

Bradley Beal had 30 points and five assists for Washington. The Wizards have dropped three straight and six of seven.

Hornets 131, Spurs 115

In San Antonio, Gordon Hayward scored a season-high 41 points and Charlotte never trailed in its victory over San Antonio.

Hayward was 15 for 19 from the field and matched a season high with five 3-pointers on six attempts.

Bryn Forbes scored 25 points for San Antonio.

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French territories gearing up for Mini Games

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chief executive officer Vicente “Ben” Babauta said the French territories of New Caledonia and Tahiti can’t wait to take part in the quadrennial games the CNMI will be hosting for the very first time next year.

“They’re actually arranging their charter flights already. New Caledonia and Tahiti are gearing up for their arrival and they’re quite excited. They’re heading north this time instead of going south,” he said.

Based on the latest numerical count update last June 30, New Caledonia will be sending 108 athletes and officials to the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022. Tahiti, meanwhile, said it has a 136 strong delegation.

In all, 1,899 athletes and officials from 21 island nations

have so far confirmed their participation in the Mini Games. Broken down they are made up of 1,425 athletes, 266 team officials, 130 PGA (Pacific Games association) officials, 52 medical staff, and 20 media personnel.

By country, the largest delegation is from the Solomon Islands with 212 athletes and officials, followed by Papua New Guinea with 172, host CNMI with 164, Fiji with 153, Guam with 144, Palau with 140, Tahiti with the aforementioned 136, Samoa with 122, New Caledonia with the aforementioned 108, American Samoa with 75, Wallis & Futuna with 66, Cook Islands with 65, Tonga with 63, Tuvalu with 52, Nauru with 47, Vanuatu with 41, Federated States of Micronesia with 40, Kiribati with 35, Norfolk Islands with 29, Niue



with 18, and Marshall Islands with 17.

Babauta said ultimately he expects the number of athletes and officials expected for the 2022 Mini

Games to balloon to over 2,000 as Australia and New Zealand didn’t submit their numbers in the June 30 update as they were still coming off participation from the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. The organizing committee will get a better picture of the numerical count by the end of this week.

“We sent out another reminder for the Dec. 17 update. We’re looking forward for that this week. It’s quite exciting because we will be receiving the new numerical entries then,” he said.

In related news, Babauta said aside from triathlon being held on Rota, Tinian will also be hosting the consolation matches for beach volleyball

in next year’s Mini Games.

“The main games will be on Saipan and then the consolation games will be on Tinian. Will probably bring 4-5 teams there. The matches that will be played there are for fourth, fifth, and sixth places,” he said.

As far as tryouts and training being conducted by the nine sports that will see action in the 2022 Mini Games, Babauta said he’s been assured that all tryouts and training are being done in accordance with the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force protocols.

“Each federation is responsible to make sure each athlete taking part is vaccinated, fully vaccinated for that matter. Thankfully most of the events are outdoor and social distancing will be practiced and the most important thing is when they come into a smaller venue they will be required to mask up. It’s well practiced like any other events coming up.”



Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chief executive officer Vicente “Ben” Babauta, seen here during the recent Northern Marianas Sports Association general membership meeting, said New Caledonia and Tahiti are excited for next year’s Pacific Mini Games in the CNMI.

MARK RABAGO

Baseball clinic for high school and UOG players starts this Saturday



The Triton Baseball Program under the Triton Athletics Department at the University of Guam will host a free baseball clinic for high school and UOG baseball players this Saturday through Thursday at the George Washington High School baseball field.

The clinic is meant for UOG players planning to play next semester as well as high school players looking to get ready for their spring season.

Baseball Clinic Schedule

- 9am – noon on Saturday, Dec. 18



- 9am – noon on Sunday, Dec. 19

- 4pm to 6pm daily from Monday, Dec. 20, to Thursday, Dec. 23

Participants should be prepared to follow the government of Guam athletics rules and regulations for COVID-19, which include:

- Providing proof of vaccination
- Temperature checks

Jake Manuel practices his swing while Tritons Baseball head coach Roke Alcantara looks on during the University of Guam baseball tryouts held Dec. 5 on the George Washington High School baseball field.

TRITON ATHLETICS

- Sign-in sheets for contract tracing

- Wearing masks when not engaged in workouts

Participants should also bring their own baseball glove and baseball pants.

Participants can sign up at

the start of the clinic on Saturday. For more information, contact Head Coach Roke Alcantara Jr. at (671) 747-4579 or rokester@gmail.com or UOG Athletics Director Doug Palmer at palmerd@triton.uog.edu or (671)735-2862. (PR)

NMIVA sets virtual meeting today



The Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association board of directors would like to inform the general public that NMIVA will be hosting a special general membership meeting at 6:30pm ChST, today, Dec. 17.

The meeting is for indi-

viduals who are interested in learning about the current and future activities of NMIVA. Due to the current health situation with COVID-19 on Saipan, the meeting will be held virtually. Interested individuals should email nmivolleyball@gmail.com for any questions to receive the URL link for the meeting. (PR)

CNMI

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in the men’s and women’s tennis,” he said.

“Basically all our players coming back have significantly gotten better. Carol will be better than she was in 2019. Isabel was here last summer and she was playing fantastic,” he added.

Race said the CNMI’s men’s team should be the top seed in the Mini Games, considering that Sinclair is undoubtedly the No. 1 tennis player in Pacific Oceania.

“By estimating we won the men’s team in 2019 and the two players most instrumental in that win are coming back, we should also be favorites. I know Colin is very excited to come back and play for the CNMI. You’ve got Colin playing the pro tour week in and week out and then Roby, three years after the 2019 Mini Games, has only gotten better playing tennis. Same with Ken.”

Race said as far as the rest of the women’s team goes, it’s still up in the air who will make the cut.

“Tania [Tan] and Malika [Miyawaki] are not playing college tennis. They’re playing club tennis which means playing regularly but they’re not training. They’re good players and they both have competitive experience.”

The Mini Games training pool also has a smattering of youth with Hye Jin Elliott and Serin Chung hoping to make the team.

“Of the players I mentioned only two of them are juniors and that’s Hye Jin and Serin. They train with me at Crowne Plaza as part

of our juniors program. Hope Asia [Raulerson] tries out I think she’s a very good addition to the team. Hye Jin and Serin are both solid players. You’ve seen them play against the boys 16 and under here and they’re doing very well.”

Raulerson currently plays the No. 1 position at NCAA Division II school Albany University.

The rest of the men’s training pool consists of Tony Atalig, Colin Ramsey, Bobby Cruz, Luther Lizama, and Morris Villanueva.

ceremony by NMBA general secretary Christy Villafior and directors Janelle Pangilinan and Guerrero.

Tolentino thanked all the players that committed to the competition and for following the guidelines implemented at the TSL Sports Complex as safety precaution against the local COVID-19 cases. The NMBA president added that the association hopes to

have a bigger competition next year once restrictions against gathering, like sports competitions, are eased. The first national championships drew 41 players with 23 of them signing up in the open division contest and 18 in the junior division.

“We would also like to acknowledge Badminton Oceania for helping the NMBA hold its first-ever national

championships and for their continued support to our various programs,” Tolentino said.

The NMI Badminton National Championships 2021 was NMBA’s last competition for the season and the group is planning to host a few more events early next year as dry-runs for the islands’ hosting of the Pacific Mini Games 2022, which will be held from June 17 to 25. (PR)

NASH

From Page 24

somewhere beautiful!” she said on her decision to sign up for the picturesque marathon.

Nash, who lives in Navy Hill but works remotely as a marketing manager for Creative Force, a company that provides software for awards and grants programs across the globe, started training for the marathon last August.

“I did nearly all my long runs with fellow Saipan runner Lily Muldoon. To me, the training is always the best part and this time was no different. Lily and I would meet at 5am and run in the dark through Marpi with a million stars overhead. So many miles, so many chats, so many great memories!”

As for the marathon itself, Nash said it was a wonderful experience. “Really—there is no better way to experience a place than to run through it. I will always feel a special bond with Monument Valley Tribal Park and the wonderful

people there.”

She dedicated her completing the marathon to the Navajo people who call Monument Valley home.

“I was given the opportunity to volunteer for a nonprofit there after the race called NavajoYES, which works to provide bicycles and outdoors activities for the children on the reservation. It was so great to get to know them and see the wonderful work they are doing there.”

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. congratulated Nash in completing her fifth marathon and like Jalen Lucido and J.C. Cadua, who took part in their first marathons recently, he said he’s always proud of the achievements of Run Saipan members.

“Proud of Lindsay. I can’t imagine running 26.2 miles in the mountains with high elevation as well and rugged terrain and on sand no less! It’s her fifth marathon and Run Saipan couldn’t be more proud of her. She is absolutely killing it at age 40,” he said.

MEDALS

From Page 24

women’s doubles crown after joining forces with Itaas.

Merlie Tolentino, president of the Northern Marianas Badminton Association, which organized the tournament through the support of Badminton Oceania, presented the medals to the winners and were joined in the awards

\$25K donated to Ronald McDonald House Charities

By MARK RABAGO

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The local franchisee of McDonald's donated \$25,000 to the Ronald McDonald House Charities last Saturday during the awards ceremony of the inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

McDonald's Guam and Saipan owner Jose "Joe" Ayuyu said the \$25,000 was the money raised from the one-day golf tournament that national golfer J.J. Atalig and women's national golf coach Yuko Togawa managed to top.

"On behalf of our McDonald's family here and our community, we want to present to Ronald McDonald House Charities the sum of \$25,000," he said to McDonald's representative Brian Wong.



McDonald's representative Brian Wong and McDonald's Guam and Saipan co-owner hold up the \$25,000 symbolic check while McDonald's Guam and Saipan owner Jose "Joe" Ayuyu says he hopes the money raised will help children at the Ronald McDonald House Charities during the awards banquet of the inaugural Ronald McDonald House of Charities Golf Tournament last Saturday at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort.

MARK RABAGO

Staggered start for Christmas Island Relay

By MARK RABAGO

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Northern Marianas Athletics' Annual Christmas Island Relay will push through as scheduled tomorrow, Dec. 18, but organizers have opted for a staggered start for all participating teams and individual runners.

In addition to a staggered start of 2 minutes apart and 6 feet social distancing at the starting line, runners no longer need to physically tag off at designated exchange zones for the 13.7 mile-long race, as NMA is strictly enforcing protocols set by the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force following the recent surge in local coronavirus cases.

NMA also has established road-running specific social distancing meet protocols for the race, which starts bright and early at 6am at Pacific Islands Club Saipan in San Antonio and concludes at the Last Command Post in Marpi. These include the elimination of handshakes before and after the race. After the race, teams and individuals will also be asked not to congregate and immediately leave the finish line area at the Last Command Post. The Top 3 teams will be announced via social media.

NMA also reminded all participants to follow all COVID-19 social distancing rules and comply with all local, state, and federal

mandates. All participants must stay home if they are sick, always wear face coverings, and frequently sanitize hands.

Race categories include open mixed teams, youth mixed teams, men's and women's solo virtual runners, and virtual 1-mile runners.

Open mixed teams must be composed of five runners who will individually alternate through 1-mile stages from start to finish. One of the members of each team must either be 16 years old or younger, a female, or 40 years of age and older.

The youth mixed teams should be made up of 16-and-under runners and must have at least one female or one 12-and-under participant. A maximum of 20 team slots are available and runners under 18 years old must obtain parental/guardian approval to participate.

Last year, Simon Shan, Ray Qi, Eason Tang, Peter Hu, and Samuel He of Agape Christian School's Team A won the Annual Christmas Island Relay in a time of 1:25:38. It was the sixth straight year, ACS won NMA's season-ending race.

For more information about NMA's Christmas Island Relay, contact Robin Sapong at rsapong@gmail.com or nmi@mf.worldathletics.com. Registration link is <https://raceroster.com/events/2021/55739/annual-christmas-island-relay>.



Agape Christian School A runners do the celebratory jump to the finish line after topping last year's Northern Marianas Athletics' Annual Christmas Island Relay.

ROSELYN B. MONROY

Ayuyu said Wong just so happened to be visiting Saipan and thanked him for agreeing to bring the money raised to Ronald McDonald House Charities.

"I just really asked him to take it to Hawaii as I want to save money on DHL or all that sort of stuff. So he's my free transporter," he joked.

In a more serious note, Ayuyu continued, "I hope you will take the check and give it to the

House and put the money to good use and help those kids out there that are less fortunate than us. We want to let them know that despite their suffering we as a community will do everything we can to support them."

Aside from Atalig and Togawa winning the championship flight and women's flight, respectively, other winners in the medal play tournament were Victor Salas (A flight), Domingo Atalig (B flight),

Lester Manglona (C flight), Joe "Kamikaze" Camacho (senior flight), and Nick Sablan (super senior flight).

In the closest to the pin, the winners were Ki Soo Kim in hole No. 3 (5'4"), Camacho in hole No. 7 (8'), Joe Sasamoto in hole No. 13 (11'3"), and Joe Crisostomo in hole No. 17 (8'83"). Larry Philip had the most accurate drive in hole No. 9 (half an inch), while Shine Tenorio had the longest drive

in hole No. 18 (283 yards).

Established in 1987, the Ronald McDonald House Charities has helped over 38,000 families from the CNMI, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of Marshall Islands, Palau, and Hawaii. It's not directly affiliated with McDonald's Corp. or any of its restaurants and relies heavily on the support of the community to continue delivering services for those in need.

Cowtown Raceway Park vandalized, burglarized

By MARK RABAGO

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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Cowtown Raceway Park in Marpi was vandalized last weekend with the perpetrator or perpetrators breaking into the track and damaging and even destroying the facility's solar lights.

Marianas Racing Association president Charles V. Cepeda said members of the CNMI motocross community are demoralized after finding out that their motocross home in Cowtown was vandalized.

"Members were asked to help in finding out who may have done this. We are also asking the community to assist in identifying these individuals so we may possibly help them in their needs. They may also have hostility toward MRA and we need to work things out. MRA members are a strong family that help each other in need, the lights belong to MRA families. It saddens me to know that someone has come into our home, maliciously damaging our MRA family property. We ask for everyone's cooperation and assistance in finding out who vandalized Cowtown," he told *Saipan Tribune*.

In a social media message to MRA members early last Monday, Cepeda announced



The pole that used to hold up the solar lights at the Cowtown Raceway Park in Marpi was cut by a vandal or vandals this past weekend.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



the vandalism and theft at the Cowtown Raceway Park.

"With a sad heart and I'm letting you all know that someone (maybe more than one person) broke into our track and damaged and destroyed our solar lights! We are asking for everyone's help in assisting us in finding out who may have done this. They seem to have walked off with the solar lights panels as well," he wrote.

The MRA president said the loss of the solar lights will hamper their practice sessions when the sun is beginning to set or already down.

"The theft of the solar lights will limit the time our members spend at the track. Some

members practice late in the afternoon into the early evening. Having the light allows them to practice until sundown and then use the light while they load up their stuff before heading home. Time at Cowtown is reduced because it gets dark without those solar lights," said Cepeda.

MRA is expected to begin its 2022 season in Jan. 16. Like the 2021 season, MRA's 2022 season will have seven points races. Aside from the points races that was sponsored by Monster Energy Drink, the club also hosted Labor Day and Thanksgiving Day races this year.

In October 2020, the Department of Public Lands and the Department of Community

and Cultural Affairs assigned Cowtown Raceway Park to the MRA after the site had sat idle for more than a decade. Since then, the motocross club fast-tracked its reconstruction into a bigger and wider race course by clearing some portions of the property to provide both riders and spectators a great view of the ocean.

Last month, MRA also welcomed a \$140,000 John Deere skid-steer loader that was given by Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. The money used to buy the skid-steer loader was sourced from American Rescue Plan Act funds. Torres said it will be the first of many more equipment that his administration plans to turn over to MRA.



Austin Reaves' 3 gives Lakers 107-104 win over Mavs in OT **PAGE 21**

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\$25K donated to Ronald McDonald House Charities **PAGE 23**

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

IN 2022 PACIFIC MINI GAMES

CNMI is the favorite in tennis

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR

This early, national tennis coach and CNMI Sports Hall of Famer Jeff Race is already expecting the CNMI to win a bumper crop of gold medals in next year's Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games.

Aside from the obvious home-court advantage and tremendous crowd support CNMI tennis players will expect, Race said the Commonwealth's top players like Colin Sinclair, who is in the International Tennis Federation Men's



Lee



Sinclair

World Tennis Tour, and Carol Lee, Roby Schorr, and Isabel Herras, who are all playing college tennis, have only gotten better since the 2019 Mini Games in Apia, Samoa.

"With our players coming

back we should be strong or stronger than the last Pacific Games. I think we have a great chance of winning gold medals. We will definitely be the favorites," he said.

The Apia Mini Games saw

Sinclair win the men's gold before teaming up with Lee and Schorr and Ken Song to win the mixed doubles and men's team gold, respectively.

Race said Lee and Herras have improved by leaps and

bounds since the XVI Pacific Games and he won't be surprised if one or even both of them medal in the Mini Games the CNMI will be hosting for the first time next year.

"We should win a medal in

the women's team. Samoa and Papua New Guinea had a super strong team last time out. Abigail Tere-Apisah, who was ranked 300 in the world at that time, I believe she just had a baby. She's starting a family and I'm not sure she's going to come. Steffi Carruthers, who won a silver medal, she's gotten married. Since it was done in Samoa she was really training hard then and back in the world tour and even got a ranking of around 600 before Samoa. That's not going to happen this time," he said.

Race added there are other very strong women's players in the region coming up like American Samoa's Kalani Soli who's played at Liberty University.

"But we will have to see who shows up. You'll never know who comes out of the woodworks. I think for the most part, we generally know which teams in the Pacific [are contenders] and unless there are any big surprises I think we should be winning medals

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Lindsay Nash took part in the 2021 Monument Valley Veterans Marathon & Half Marathon at the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in Arizona last month. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

Nash runs 42K on 40th birthday

By MARK RABAGO
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ASSOCIATE EDITOR



Run Saipan member Lindsay Nash marked her 40th birthday last month by taking part in the 2021 Monument Valley Veterans Marathon & Half Marathon at the Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in Arizona.

Nash, who occasionally

writes for *Saipan Tribune*, completed the 42-kilometer run in 5:47.27.8 to finish first in her age group and seventh overall among women.

"This was my fifth marathon. I have been running most of my life. I had always planned to do a marathon to celebrate my 40th birthday, so I chose the Monument Valley Marathon in Arizona to do it. If you're going to go run 26 miles, it better be

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Medals awarded to national championships winners



Winners in the U19 division of the inaugural NMI Badminton National Championships and Northern Marianas Badminton Association officials pose for a photo during the awards ceremony for the competition last weekend at the TSL Sports Complex. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

The first place winners in the inaugural NMI Badminton National Championships were awarded with medals during a brief ceremony at the TSL Sports Complex last weekend.

Junior player Taka Borja and Pacific Games veteran Janelle Pangilinan led the awardees as they each received three medals. Borja ruled the U19 men's singles and doubles (with Daniel Pablo) and also clinched the mixed doubles championship after teaming up with Khristelle Itaas. Pangilinan, on the other hand, got the first place medals in the women's open singles and doubles (with Jen Savellano) and mixed doubles (with Nate Guerrero).

Besides Borja, Pangilinan, Guerrero, and Savellano, other players who received their first place medals in last Dec. 10's awards ceremony were Joseph Torres (men's open singles winner) and his doubles partner Jordan Pangilinan. Completing the champions circle was Sophia Quintos, who bagged the girls U19 singles title and also the U19

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